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The
Letters of Synesius
of Cyrene

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The Letters of Synesius of Cyrene

Translated into English with Introduction and Notes

BY

AUGUSTINE FITZGERALD



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PREFACE

THE Letters of Synesius, as we gather from the references to them in Photius and Suidas, were greatly admired in the later days of the Roman Empire. In spite of their great historical interest, however, and the undeniable charm of their style, they have never been rendered into English, with the exception of some passages which have been included in the works of historians or biographers. In France they were translated for the first time by Lapatz in 1870, a work which was followed in 1878 by the brilliant translation of Druon. Although hitherto somewhat neglected by English scholars, they have an unquestionable value for the student of the fourth and fifth centuries, as they cast much light on the social, political, and intellectual life of that period, as well as its conceptions on religion, and they supply another link in the chain of epistles which includes those of Julian and Basil preceding them, and Sidonius following them more than half a century later, of which excellent translations are now available for the English reader. It is my object in this work to give a translation of this celebrated example of later Hellenistic Greek that may supply a deficiency in this respect.

Although neither the principal works of Synesius nor his Letters have been rendered into English, a good deal has been written about his life, and much critical ingenuity displayed by various scholars in regard to controversial questions that have arisen. It would be difficult to throw any new light on certain obscurities and contradictions in dates, and on the doubtful chronological sequence of the letters, after the work of such men as Volkmann, Clausen, Druon, Otto Seeck, Crawford, and others, a list of whose works will be found in the bibliography contained in this volume, and many of whom I have quoted in the introduction and in the notes. I have

freely cited passages from the many workers in this field, in order to bring before the reader the best that has been said on the subject, without pushing too far arguments on debatable points. For those who wish to go more deeply into these questions, there is the exhaustive work of Crawford, in which no matter connected with the life and writings of Synesius has been neglected. This interesting book is unfortunately out of print.

The question of the philosophic and religious opinions of Synesius is inseparable from the study of his letters. The seething forces and cross-currents of religious beliefs which set in at the beginning of the Christian era ; the growth of Neoplatonism which began with Philo of Alexandria, and culminated in the mystical doctrines of Plotinus ; the development in extent and authority of the Christian Church, at once the friend and foe of any system of Platonic philosophy ; the influence left by the fifty jarring sects of Gnostics, not to speak of the followers of Mithra ; all these elements entered into the imaginative mind of Synesius, and produced a mentality which a modern theologian has described as a curious religious phenomenon.

I have attempted to indicate in the introduction my own view that Synesius was at no time a Neoplatonist at heart, and that the early influences of his education were probably founded directly on Plato and the traditions of the Stoics, acquired no doubt in his native Cyrene ; but it is a baffling task to attempt to separate these strands of the cable that anchored his soul to its hopes. But hope there was, for he tells us in his *Dreams* that it is only by the saving grace of hope that man may live at all. For the rest, I have tried to give in the Introduction and in the notes whatever is essential to the understanding of the text, and the little that can be gleaned about the correspondents to whom the letters are addressed.

The text which I have adopted is taken from Hercher's *Epistolographi Graeci*, and is essentially that of Petavius. There is a discrepancy between the numbering of the letters in this edition and that of Migne, beginning at Letter 130 (Hercher). This by some error has been numbered 129* in Migne, repeating the number of

the previous letter. The numbering of all the following letters in Migne's edition has been thrown out by this error. Letters 157 and 158 are not printed in Migne's edition, and Letter 159 is numbered 156.¹ There has been some doubt cast on the authenticity of these three letters in the collection, a full discussion of which will be found in Professor Terzaghi's article in the *Rivista Filologica Italiana* referred to in the bibliography. He has, too, given us an extremely interesting study of the clausulae of the letters and other prose works of Synesius. I should like to call attention also to the fact that the Latin translation in the edition of Petavius, which is reproduced in that of Hercher, is not by the great Jesuit scholar himself, but by Franciscus Portus, and is therefore of less value (see Vellay, *Hymnes de Synésius*, &c.).

I have arranged the Letters according to the text of Hercher, the arrangement adopted by Petavius, following the manuscript order, on the ground that it makes references to the Greek text easier. Unfortunately this arrangement is devoid of chronological sequence. Much ingenuity has been spent in attempting to re-establish the dates of the letters, and Druon and Lapatz have arranged their translations in the sequence which they conjecture from internal and external evidence to be right. The order given by Druon is certainly plausible, and I have appended to each Letter the number which refers to the corresponding number in his work.

In conclusion I wish to express my thanks to the friends who have helped me in this work by their advice and assistance. I wish to thank Sir Frederic G. Kenyon for his great kindness in comparing some of my translations with the text, and in giving me some valuable criticisms and suggestions. I am equally indebted to Professor Harmon, of Yale University, for some notes with which he furnished me on certain renderings of difficult passages, and which I have

¹ In the same way Letter 80 in Hercher's edition is put down in Migne as 79 *bis*. This throws out the agreement of the other numbers in the two editions respectively until we come to Letter 100 in Migne. The following number, 101, is omitted altogether, so that the concordance of numbering is again restored until we come to 130 in Migne, after which the ways part again.

incorporated in my translation; and I wish above all to express my gratitude to Professor Alexander Souter, of the University of Aberdeen, for his kindness in consenting to look over the proofs for me, and to whose scholarly accuracy I am greatly indebted. M. Bauduin de Belleval, ancien élève de l'école normale supérieure, of Paris, has also rendered me a great service in comparing my work with the text, and in some appreciations of the French commentators which he has given me. I am also much indebted to Professor Terzaghi, of the University of Naples, for some valuable suggestions, as also to Professor Calder of the University of Manchester. My friend M. Desrousseaux, Professor of Greek at the École des Hautes Études, has helped me generously with his advice.

Of my Oxford friends I owe much to the encouragement of Professor C. H. Turner of Magdalen College, Mr. G. R. G. Mure of Merton, and Professor Spenser Wilkinson of All Souls.

It is with sadness that I have to refer to the death of another friend, F. C. Conybeare, late Fellow of University College, who was so kind as to review for me a considerable portion of my work.

It is intended to follow the present volume with a translation of the other works of Synesius, which has already been completed in manuscript.

A. F.

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INTRODUCTION

ON the northern coast of Libya, about a hundred miles to the east of Benghazi, the site of the fabled Garden of the Hesperides, there lies a lofty table-land on which stand the ruins of the once famous and prosperous Cyrene. All travellers who have visited the spot agree in paying a tribute to the great beauty and fertility of the country surrounding it. Pacho, a Frenchman who visited it in the early part of the nineteenth century and who began important excavations on the site of the ancient city, writes as follows: 'Though the works of man have been destroyed, Nature has remained the same. The sun shines on the grave of the ancient town, the beneficent rain falls on the heaps of ruins, but the charm of Nature in this region, to which Hellas transplanted its enlightenment and its bloom, appears ineffaceable. The sunshine still enamels verdant meadows, the rain fertilizes fields that are still fruitful, the woods are still abundantly shaded, the groves are smiling yet; myrtles and laurels grow in solitary valleys, though no lovers are there to pick them and no visitors to receive their wreaths.'

Hamilton, again, writing in 1842, says, 'The Wady Shelalea presents a scene beyond any power of description. The olive is here contrasted with the fig, the tall cypress and the dark juniper with the arbutus and myrtle, and the pleasant breeze which always blows through the valley is laden with balmy perfumes.' Beechey, in his account of the expedition to the north coast of Africa in 1825, describes Grennah (Cyrene) as standing on the edge of a high plateau, one thousand eight hundred feet above the level of the sea and distinctly visible from it except in hazy weather.¹ The plateau, when Beechey saw it, was cultivated with wheat, and a thousand feet below another richly wooded plain extended, diversified with meadows

¹ πόλις μεγάλη ἐν τραπεζοειδῇ πεδίῳ κειμένη, ὡς ἐκ τοῦ πελάγους ἑωρῶμεν αὐτήν. Strabo speaks of seeing a great city situated on a table-land from the sea as he was skirting the coast. Bk. XVII. 3. 20, p. 837.

and cornfields. Such was the setting of Nature to the town in which Synesius was born and which to-day is only to be traced by scattered ruins and rock tombs. Even in the days when Synesius passed his childhood there, it was shorn of its old glory. Eight centuries had passed since Pindar had sung of the wealth and power of Arcesilas, King of Cyrene, the last but one of the descendants of Battus, its legendary founder. Thus begins the fifth Pythian ode in honour of his victory in the chariot race, 462 B.C.: 'Wide reaching is the power of wealth, whensoever a mortal man hath received it at the hands of fate with pure virtue mingled, and bringeth it to his home, a follower that winneth him many friends.'¹

Plutarch tells us that after the fall of the monarchy and the institution of a republic, the citizens of Cyrene, being in dire distress at the bad administration of their country, sent a deputation to Plato to beg of him to draw up for them a code of laws and a constitution.² But the philosopher declined to accede to their request, saying that no men are so difficult to govern as those whom great wealth and prosperity have cradled in the illusion that they are happy. Whatever may be the truth of this story, there seems to be no doubt of the great commerce of the Cyreneans in the 5th century B.C. and of the fact that Cyrene was also a centre of culture, learning, and art. This has been amply attested in modern times by the beautiful works of sculpture and painting which have been recovered in recent excavations, and which cover a time extending from an earlier period than that in which Pindar sang, to the days of Hadrian.

The legendary history of Cyrenaica, as we find it in Herodotus and Pindar, is a romantic one, and forms a poetic if somewhat tragic background to the great natural beauty of the site of the ancient city.³

'O Carneian Apollo, we honour the nobly built city of Cyrene, which is held by mail-clad Trojans from a foreign shore, even by the descendants of Antenor. For they came with Helen, after they had seen their native city burned in the war.'⁴

¹ Myers' translation, *Pyth.* v. 1.

² Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus*, c. 2, p. 492.

³ Cp. Ep. 103: 'If I were to say that philosophy is in itself a sufficient force to lift up cities, Cyrene would convict me of error, for she has certainly fallen lower than any of the towns of Pontus.'

⁴ Pindar (Sandys' translation), *Pyth.* v. 79.

But the ancestry of this dynasty, according to Pindar, is even older than the Siege of Troy, for in the fourth Pythian ode he traces the descent of Arcesilas to Euphemus the Argonaut who sailed with Jason in quest of the Golden Fleece.

I have called attention to these legends of the past because the mind of Synesius seems to have been deeply impressed by all that pertained to the ancient glories of his native city and because he so frequently alludes to his own descent from Eurysthenes, who led the Dorians into Sparta. Ammianus Marcellinus in the fourth century speaks of it as a deserted town,¹ although the traditions of its former culture seemed to have survived in the days in which Synesius wrote. Its commerce had dwindled, its soil had become largely exhausted, its sister cities had encountered the fire and sword of the rude tribes of the desert, but an echo of the poets and philosophers who once had dwelt there must have still lingered within its walls.² It seems certain that he was born in Cyrene itself; for he alludes to it in Letter 4 as τὴν μητέρα Κυρήνην, 'our mother Cyrene'.

As to the date of the birth of Synesius nothing is known and conjectures vary.³ Some scholars place it as early as the year 350, and others

¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, xxii. 16 § 4 'In Pentapoli Libya Cyrene est posita, urbs antiqua sed deserta, quam Spartanus condidit Battus.'

² Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 143 d εἰ μὲν τῶν ἐν Κυρήνῃ μᾶλλον ἐκηδόμεν, ὧ Θεόδωρε, τά κεῖ ἄν σε καὶ περὶ ἐκείνων ἀν' ἡρώτων εἴ τις αὐτοῦ περὶ γεωμετρίαν ἢ τιν' ἄλλην φιλοσοφίαν εἰσι τῶν νέων ἐπιμέλειαν ποιοῦμενοι.

³ It is only from his address (*De Regno*) to the Emperor Arcadius that the date of Synesius' birth can be fixed with any degree of probability. In this he speaks to the young Emperor, as an older man to a younger. The date of this address belongs to either the years 397-400 or 399-402, during which years Synesius was living at Constantinople. Now in 400 Arcadius was twenty-three or twenty-five years old, and Synesius older than the Emperor. This brings us for the year of his birth to the time between 370 and 375. Of these possible dates Grützmacher selects a date not long after 370, following Druon. Crawford, however, defends the date 360, as follows:

'In one, perhaps two, of his *Letters*, Synesius calls himself an old man. In Ep. 123 he says: "If it should be my fortune to have these privileges, I shall prove that the story of Aeson the Thessalian is no longer a fable—who, as poetry declares, twice attained to youth, having turned from advanced years into a young man." Would the remark have any point, unless he considered himself at least approaching old age at the time when he made it? This letter Lapatz ascribes to 403. An old man at twenty-eight! The words of Ep. 116 are unmistakable: "That I am not only older than you, but

as late as 379. Druon and Grützmacher are agreed in placing it between 370 and 375; Crawford, however, makes out a very plausible case for the year 360.

We may therefore assume that he was born in the reign of the Eastern Emperor Valens, who was succeeded in 379 by Theodosius. On the death of the latter in 395, when the Empire was divided amongst his sons, Cyrenaica with the rest of the Eastern world fell to the share of Arcadius.¹

The materials for the life of Synesius are, unfortunately, far from adequate. The letters which have come down to us are the principal foundation of the rather fragile structure of a biography, in which dates and events can only be determined by inferences drawn from the text with more or less plausibility. The work of sifting whatever evidence exists has been very ably done by many scholars, beginning in the seventeenth century with the great Jesuit Petau, who established the text that we use to-day, which has been reprinted in Migne's *Patrology*, and with certain emendations in Hercher's *Epistolographi Graeci*.

The family of Synesius was a rich and illustrious one, if we may trust his own evidence in the matter. Of Greek ancestry, he traces his descent to Eurysthenes who led the Dorians into Sparta.²

The only members of his family with whom we are concerned in reading the letters are his elder brother Euoptius, to whom a greater number are addressed than to any one correspondent, his sister Stratonice,³ his wife, a somewhat shadowy figure, and his children—three sons. Mention is also made of his nephew, Dioscurius,⁴ and his niece,⁵ both of these children of Euoptius.

The education of Synesius was begun in his father's house at Cyrene, or so we must presume. He speaks of a certain Auxentius⁶ as having been the companion of his youth; and probably it was in Cyrenaica that he had his first training in rhetoric. From a passage in

already even an old man, is clear." This was written, according to Lapatz, in 410, when he and Miss Gardner hold Synesius to have been about thirty-five. Even if we suppose it not written till shortly before his death, can we imagine him describing himself as actually an old man, if he was not more than thirty-eight or so when he died? . . . we should require strong evidence to convince us that, at any period, a man under forty looked upon himself as old." (Crawford, p. 8.)

¹ Somn. 18.

² Ep. 57; c. Andron. 8; Ep. 113.

³ Ep. 7; 75.

⁴ Ep. 53.

⁵ Ep. 56.

⁶ Ep. 60.

Letter 127 one commentator at least¹ has assumed that he did some military service as soon as he was of an age to carry arms. Be this as it may, he seems to have entered the University of Alexandria in the year 394 or thereabouts, if we can trust the chronology of Druon (p. 604).

This may well have been a turning-point in his life, for it was here that he met the famous Hypatia, between whom and himself a friendship grew up which lasted throughout his life, and to whom, in the seven letters addressed to her, he writes in terms of unreserved gratitude, of affection and veneration.² This gifted woman occupied at that moment a commanding position in the intellectual world of Alexandria, and her lectures drew throngs of enthusiastic students. Her great personal beauty, her virtue, the charm of her manner, and the reputation of vast learning which she enjoyed, had made an impression on her contemporaries that it is impossible at this day to over-estimate, but an echo of which we can perceive in the impassioned language of Synesius. In the address to Paeonius he speaks of her as 'the most sacred teacher,'³ and in Letter 137 he alludes to her as 'the one who presides over the sacred mysteries of philosophy'. In the complete absence of any works by Hypatia, we cannot in the present day form any exact conception of the system of philosophy taught by her, beyond the inferences that may be drawn from

¹ Druon, p. 11.

² The following epigram, translated by Toland, has been attributed to Florus, a sixth-century poet.

Ὅταν βλέπω σε, προσκυνῶ, καὶ τοὺς λόγους,
τῆς παρθένου τὸν οἶκον ἀστρῶν βλέπων
εἰς οὐρανὸν γάρ ἐστι σοῦ τὰ πράγματα,
Ἑπατία σεμνὴ τῶν λόγων εὐμορφία,
ἄχραντον ἄστρον τῆς σοφῆς παιδείσεως.

The Virgin's starry sign whene'er I see,
Adoring, on thy words I think, and thee,
For all thy virtuous works celestial are,
As are thy learned works beyond compare,
Divine Hypatia, who dost far and near
Virtue's and learning's spotless star appear.

The tragic end of Hypatia is dramatically described in Kingsley's famous romance, a work of no small historical importance.

³ In this letter he speaks of the astrolabe which he is presenting to Paeonius in these terms—*διανοίας μὲν ἔργον ἐμῆς, ὅσα μοι συνευπόρησεν ἡ σεβασμιωτάτη διδάσκαλος* (Petau, p. 310, Migne, p. 1584 A).

the works of Synesius himself, the one writer we possess whose mind seems to have been formed by her lectures and personal influence. Unfortunately there is not much to be gathered from such inferences, beyond the fact that they point vaguely to some form of Neoplatonism. Druon and Grützmacher have described the philosophy of Synesius as quite wanting in originality. If such an estimate of it is an accurate one, it must be—such as it is—a reflected light from another mind, and it is difficult to believe that he would have followed any other than the mind for which he had such a veneration. We know that Hypatia, the daughter of a mathematician, was herself also a mathematician, and that she taught geometry and astronomy. The influence of this side of her intellect and teaching is manifest in the address to Paeonius, in which she is expressly mentioned. It is, however, possible that the teaching of Hypatia was a direct study and exposition of the works of Plato, and that her ideas on this philosopher had not crystallized into the semi-mystical form that we find in Plotinus, and later in Proclus. It is interesting in this connexion to enumerate the passages in the essays and letters that contain direct citations from the writings of other philosophers.

In the works of Synesius that have come down to us, there are 126 quotations from Plato, 36 from Plutarch, 20 from Aristotle, 9 from Plotinus, and 3 from Porphyry.¹ If, therefore, the tendency to quote an author may be taken as an indication of that author's influence, it would seem that Plato was the directing principle in his philosophic conceptions, Neoplatonism taking an obviously inferior place. I am inclined to believe that the mind of Synesius was of too rugged a character to admit of his following the mystical subtleties of Neoplatonic thought, and that rather he sought, unconsciously perhaps, in the works of Plato the inspiration for a life of action.

For his character is essentially that of a man of action. The multitudinous complaints which keep recurring throughout his letters, railings against the harshness of fate that precludes his giving himself up to the enjoyments of philosophic contemplation, all these seem the protest of a sensitive soul that feels its own impotence against its real destiny of action.

¹ The figures I have quoted are from the excellent list of quotations published by Crawford at the end of his work, *in extenso*. Albert Hauck gives 160 references to Plato, but unfortunately does not print the texts.

The earliest work of Synesius—a work which has not come down to us—was the *Cynegetica*,¹ or *On the Chase*, the date of which Lapatz fixes not later than 401. The selection of the subject is perhaps typical of the character and tastes of the man. A passion for hunting was one of his strongest instincts, and later in his life, when confronted with the decision to be made in accepting or declining a bishopric, he sighs at the thought of abandoning his bow to rust and his dogs to idleness. It is difficult to conceive of a man with this spirit abandoning himself to the doctrine of ecstasy with a Plotinus or a Porphyry.

After his student life at Alexandria, Synesius visited Athens, although it is not apparent how long he remained there. If, again, we may accept Druon's chronology, this visit took place in the year 395.

His impressions of the ancient seat of learning are conveyed with a caustic touch of satire in Letter 136. It would seem from a perusal of Letter 54 that he must have gone to Athens rather in a spirit of irritation against the acolytes of learning whom he had met in Alexandria and Cyrene, who had drunk not too deeply at the historic spring and who, on the strength of their contact with the decrepit remains of the Lyceum and the Academy, were wont to adopt a patronizing tone to the students of Alexandria or Cyrene.²

In the year 397 we again hear of him in Alexandria. The fourth letter, describing a perilous sea voyage from that port, culminating in shipwreck, is written from Azarion.

Much ingenuity has been expended in attempting to fix the date of this letter. It is one of the longest in the series, and perhaps the most celebrated. It gives us a vivid account of navigation about the beginning of the fifth century, and describes how the author having set sail from the port of Alexandria encountered one storm after another in the voyage, and how finally his vessel after losing masts and sails, contrived with difficulty to make the port of Azarion on the Libyan coast. We understand that the voyage began about Friday, and it seems that on the night of Tuesday there was a new moon. This was the eighteenth of the month, reckoning, as Synesius does, according to the Egyptian calendar; it would be the thirteenth of the Julian. Taking this slender basis for a calculation,

¹ This work seems to have been written not long after his university days in Alexandria, and when fairly fresh from the lectures and influence of Hypatia.

² See also Ep. 136.

Tillemont endeavoured to show that the voyage must have taken place in 396, or 402, or 413.¹ Petau by a similar line of argument had come to the conclusion that the year was 410. Druon, after discussing at length the arguments of his predecessors, rejects them both and decides upon the year 397 as the only one in which the conditions of the problem are fulfilled. Grützmacher, however, following Otto Seeck, has succeeded in definitely fixing the date on 28th January of the year 404, that is to say, the night on which the new moon was observed by Synesius. His argument, which is sustained by the calculations of a modern astronomer, I have given elsewhere.² This letter, which is of an intimate nature and addressed to his brother Euoptius, is curious and interesting for the light it throws upon the religious side of Synesius' character. It seems to reflect a rather crude but normal type of paganism, such as we might have imagined popular in the Greek colony which was his home, but which is completely at variance with the ideals of a refined Neoplatonic paganism such as are reflected in his Hymns. In Letter 105, written to the same brother about twelve years later, we find ourselves in a different world, the horizon of which is that of the philosopher and Platonist, seeking a formula that will reconcile him to ordination in the Christian Church.

It was in the year 397, according to Druon and Clausen,³ that Synesius was appointed by his native town Cyrene, probably with the concurrence of the other cities in the Cyrenaica, as a special envoy to the Emperor Arcadius at Constantinople; but Seeck, followed by Grützmacher, is of opinion that this mission was entrusted to him two years later, in 399-400. We must therefore place the period of his sojourn in Constantinople at such dates as would include the years 397-400, or taking it two years later, the years 399-402. So much seems to be certain, that Synesius, after spending three years at the court of the Emperor Arcadius left Constantinople suddenly in consequence of an earthquake. As the chronicle

¹ t. xii. (Paris, 1707), p. 687.

² See note to Letter 4.

³ The reason for assigning this date to the departure of Synesius for Constantinople, is to be found in Letter 61, in which he describes his sudden departure from Athens as having taken place when his friend Aurelian was consul, i. e. the year 400 (Zosimus, v. 12). Again in the treatise *On Dreams* (c. 9 [18 Druon]) he states that he was three years in Constantinople. See also Hymn 3, v. 431.

of Marcellinus mentions a great earthquake in the imperial city in the year 402, the supposition of Seeck is plausible.¹ The motives of the people of Cyrenaica in sending their envoy to the imperial court are clear enough. The right of direct appeal to the Emperor was a constitutional reform that had come in during the reign of Constantius,² and had been endorsed by Theodosius; and the governors of provinces were enjoined by law to place no obstacle in the way of the exercise of their right.³

Cyrenaica had been sadly devastated by swarms of locusts, by the raids of the Ausurians, and by the evils of a corrupt administration. The suffering country could only with great difficulty pay the taxes that were levied upon it, and in return for which it was receiving neither assistance nor protection. It was at such a moment as this that a new hope seems to have entered men's souls, in the appointment of this brilliant young scion of their native city, who lacked neither the eloquence nor the courage to press their cause before the still younger Emperor.

Synesius was therefore sent as envoy-extraordinary to Arcadius bearing with him the offering of a golden wreath, according to the custom of the time—'Cyrene has sent me', he declares in the speech which he finally delivered before the Emperor, 'to crown your head with gold and your soul with philosophy; Cyrene, a Greek town, an old and noble name, was erstwhile sung in a thousand odes by the wise men of the past; to-day she

¹ Seeck, pp. 458 ff. Seeck bases his argument on a passage in the Egyptian story, from which it would appear that Synesius was not only in Constantinople when Aurelian was banished, which happened after 21 April or 11 May 400, but also when Aurelian returned in 402. He relates here how he himself was on the spot during the flight of Gainas, the Goth, following immediately on the recall of Aurelian.

It would seem therefore, as Grützmacher understands Seeck, that Synesius was staying at Constantinople during the second term of Caesarius' office as prefect, i. e. 400-402, also during his deposition and the reinstatement of Aurelian in 402, and could only have left the court in that year (see Grütz. p. 33). 'Then to the stranger' (the stranger is Synesius) 'what had long seemed burdensome now seemed fortunate, and he complained no longer of his enforced sojourn, during which he was to become an eye-witness of the appearance of the Gods.' (*Egyptian Tale*.)

The date then given by Seeck disagrees only with the assumption about Letter 61, whereby Aurelian would be consul (*ὑπατος*) in the year when Synesius left Constantinople. In order to harmonize this incident with his own theory of the letter's date, Seeck conjectures that the right reading is *ὑπαρχος*, or in other words 'prefect'. Aurelian was prefect in 402. The conjecture is certainly an interesting one.

² The law of Constantius, A. D. 355, Cod. Theodos. xii. § 12, 1.

³ Druon, 18 seq.

is poor and desolate, a heap of ruins, and needs the help of a king if she is to recover a tithe of her ancient glory'.¹

But it was one thing to be accredited to the court as the envoy of Cyrene, and another to gain an audience of the Emperor, and although there is no evidence as to when his famous address 'On Kingship' was delivered in the presence of Arcadius, a passage in the oration itself would lead us to suppose that he had been compelled to wait some time before thus fulfilling his mission.

'The dignity of your very position', he says in addressing the Sovereign, 'keeps you imprisoned within your palace . . . the only advantage you gain from this existence of the cloister is that if some citizen distinguishes himself by his intellect you distrust him.'² Again he exclaims, 'Let the King make access to himself easy, for the envoys of distant cities as well as for those of cities near at hand'.³ The allusions moreover in the 'Dreams' and the third Hymn, seem also imbued with a spirit of embittered impatience at the delays that he had to endure in the ante-chambers of the court. I am therefore inclined to follow Crawford and Druon in supposing that the great address was not delivered until after a residence of two years at Constantinople, and in spite of Petau's opinion, followed by the Abbé Tillemont, that the audience took place in the year of his arrival.

Nor is there any reason for surprise at such a delay in procedure. The Emperor Arcadius was a weak and incompetent being, apparently completely in the hands of the ignoble Eutropius,⁴ a grasping and unprincipled character, a stumbling-block to all who were not fitted to play a part in his intrigues or to pander to his ambitions. The young Emperor, who had ascended the throne as a mere boy of twenty, had divided with his brother Honorius the spheres of the Western and Eastern Empire, the former ruling at Constantinople and the latter at Rome. But the real master of the West was the Vandal Stilicho, and of the East Eutropius.

It was before this rather languid and apathetic sovereign that Synesius read the impassioned appeal known as *De Regno*, the first in point of time of his works that have come down to us, and perhaps the most brilliant. In it he speaks both for his native town and for the whole Empire. He

¹ *De Regno* § 2 (p. 1055 c).

² *De Regno*, 10 [Migne].

³ *Ibid.*, § 17 (p. 1099 c).

⁴ Eutropius, the eunuch, was a target for the biting satire of Claudian.

was speaking at a moment when the Roman Empire was at the parting of the ways, the one leading to the supremacy of the Goth and Vandal, the other to the inevitable alternative of a rallying of the Roman to the standard of his distinctly national and historic principles. The choice was between a policy of indefinite temporization and one of drastic reform.

The orator speaks in no uncertain terms. He urges a complete change in the constitution of the army, by which native-born Roman citizens shall supplant Scythian mercenaries or other promiscuous Gothic hordes whose pay is plunder, the stern cutting down of the expenses of the imperial court, the presence of the sovereign amongst his troops, and easy access to him of all those who represented distant parts of the Empire.

The address vibrates with patriotic enthusiasm, and reading it after this lapse of years one cannot but feel that it must have awakened a thrill in any Roman breast.

'Kings', he says, 'should hold in great honour speech that is free and independent. Flattery is seductive, but it leads to destruction; it is the poison in the honeyed cup offered to those condemned to death. . . . Let philosophy explain herself; do not condemn her to silence because she brings austere precepts to youth.'¹

He next proceeds to make an eloquent appeal for the formation of an army which shall count none but Roman citizens, and, speaking of the Scythians, demands, in the words of Homer, that the Emperor may

'Chase away these accursed dogs that Destiny has sent.'²

'If you will only believe me, he continues, 'this task which seems so difficult will be an easy one. It is sufficient to increase the number of our soldiers and restore their confidence. Afterwards, when we shall have a citizen army . . . direct your wrath against these barbarians, and soon in submission to your will they shall be tilling the soil. So the Messenians of yore surrendered arms and served the Spartans as helots.'

This, then, is the cardinal doctrine of his address; to turn out of Constantinople, more than this, out of the whole Roman Empire, the parasitic growth of the Goth and the Scythian. The time was certainly ripe for a reformer who should have the power to make the Roman prevail against

¹ *De Regno*, I.

² *Iliad*, viii. 527 :

ἐξελάαν ἐνθένδε κύνας κηρεσσιφορήτους (*De Regno* § 15, p. 1097 c).

the Goth, nor was Synesius without an influential friend in Aurelian, to whom three of his letters are addressed, a statesman who took a prominent part in the great struggle and with alternate fortunes. Aurelian was praetorian praefect in 399 and consul in 400. His banishment towards the end of this year was followed soon afterwards by his recall and restoration to favour, following the defeat of the Goths and their expulsion from Rome, but at the time when Synesius came on his mission to Constantinople, he was a man of high influence at the court. Grützmacher holds the opinion that the address *On Kingship* was largely inspired by Aurelian, and that the thoughts expressed in it are his own political propaganda for which he succeeded in making Synesius the mouthpiece.

But was this address ever delivered before the Emperor in the language in which it has come down to us? A French historian, M. Aubé, scouts the idea as absurd.

‘The brutal frankness on which Synesius prides himself,’ he says, ‘and which indeed he pushes to the extreme limit, the open satire that he indulges in about the personages of the court and their affairs, the impertinent lesson that he gives the prince and his ministers, all this proves that the speech was written after the event. He would never have solicited an audience and waited three years before obtaining it, only to compromise the success of his mission at the last moment by the rudeness of his language. Moreover Arcadius would not have failed to punish the insolent orator, instead of rewarding him as he did by granting vicarial privileges to his province.’¹

Is it possible that the speech is like Cicero’s famous *Defence of Milo*, written after the event and much more than an echo of the one delivered in the forum? An admirer of Synesius would not like to admit this, as it would imply a deliberate act of deception, the only motive of which could be inordinate vanity; for he takes credit to himself for his patriotic courage in reading an address to the Emperor couched in such terms.² It seems not impossible that the open criticisms were appreciated in the stifling atmosphere of the court as an agreeable gust of fresh air from the

¹ *Nouvelle Bibliographie generale* : article, ‘Synésius’.

² ‘Divination has been of the greatest service to me . . . it sustained me throughout the long period of my mission, which it made successful for the great benefit of the cities of Libya. It brought me before the Emperor in the midst of his court, wherein I used a freedom of speech unexampled amongst the Greeks.’ *On Dreams*, 9 (p. 1309 A).

mountains and shores of Libya. Be this as it may, the address *On Kingship* stands as an unexampled document of the period, the first appeal for the citizen army which we know of in the-history of Europe, for it must be noted that his remarks would apply equally to the Western Empire. This address is so important both as an historical and as a biographical document that I think it worth while to quote it at some length.

‘Philosophy instructed us just now that a king should often appear in the midst of his troops and not shut himself up within his palace; for her teaching was that only by a daily habit of approach to him could the affection which alone is the safest guard of kings be assured. Amongst what race of soldiers therefore should a philosopher who loves his king advise him to encamp, and to train his body in discipline? Are not they clearly indicated whom the farms give him as fighting men, the cities also, and in a word the land over which he rules; those whom this land has provided to be guardians of the state, and of the laws under which they were brought up and were educated? Why, these are the very men whom Plato compared to watch-dogs; none the less the shepherd must not place wolves amongst his dogs, for although when taken, in the first instance, as whelps they may seem to be well tamed, in an evil hour will he have entrusted his flock to them. For whenever these latter detect any signs of weakness or laziness amongst the dogs, they will turn at once against them as also against the flock itself and its shepherds. Now arms should not be given by the lawgiver to those who have not been born and bred under his laws. Obviously he has no guarantee of the good will of men like these. Truly it is only a reckless man or an inspired prophet who could see this great mass of youths born in foreign countries, and given over to their own national customs, filling the military posts in his own country and not be filled with fear. For we must either trust that all these men will become enlightened citizens, or very justly dismissing such an idea as absurd, believe that the rock of Tantalus is hanging over the State, and suspended only by the lightest threads. These men will certainly make an attempt against us when they think that the opportunity is ready to their hand. . . . Not to take defensive measures against the barbarians and, as if we imagined their forces to be our own proper forces, to accede to the wishes of the many who ask for exemption from military service, and to allow other citizens to desert the army for quite different callings; what else is all this than the conduct of men hastening to destruction? Rather than allow the Scythians to be under arms here, we ought to seek from our farm lands so dear to us the men who would fight to defend them, and we ought to enrol all such in a military force. For this force we should recruit the learned professor from his lecture-room, the craftsman from his lowlier calling, from the market who-soever is engaged therein, and finally the masses of drones who infest the

theatres by reason of their unlimited idleness. We should persuade these last to bestir themselves before the moment approaches when in place of laughter they shall be turned to tears; for there is no barrier of ashamedness, greater or less, that can stand in the way of the Romans possessing a national army. For as in the family so also in states the duty of protection against what is without devolves upon the male element, while that which concerns whatsoe'er is within has been turned over to the female side. Is it not then intolerable that with us the man and the protector should be the foreigner? What could be more shameful than that an Empire splendidly endowed with men should yield to others the glory in war? For my own part, even should these foreigners gain many victories for us, I should be ashamed to owe them such. But—

Well I know, I do opine

(for it is in the range of every one who has common sense) that when these elements we have been speaking about, the male and the female, do not happen to be brothers and sisters or in any other way sprung from the same stock, very little prophecy is needed to foretell that those who are under arms will demand to be the dominators of those who amuse themselves in the city. And these latter, unused to the arts of war, will sooner or later be fighting against those who have been trained amidst the shock of armaments. Before then they come to that disaster, towards which they are marching, let them recover for themselves sentiments worthy of Romans, and let them accustom themselves to win their own victories in person, tolerating no partnership with the barbarian force, but on the contrary excluding it from every rank. . . . Let the soldiers be ordered to show consideration to the townspeople, and to those in the country districts also, and to give as little trouble as possible to them; being mindful of the labours which they themselves have undertaken on account of the civilians. For in order that the possessions of the cities and the country may be safely preserved, the king fights in the first rank, and enrolls troops to do battle. Whosoe'er, therefore, drives away the foreign enemy but fails to treat me with justice, such a man seems to me to differ in no wise from a dog who pursues the wolves as far as possible in order that he himself may devour the flock at his ease, when he ought to receive for the guarding of them only that payment of milk which is his due. Peace is only assured when soldiers have been trained to treat the unarmed population as their brothers, and to take only such property as has been assigned to them.¹

¹ *De Regno* § 14 (p. 1089 B)—§ 18 (p. 1100 D). How prophetic were the words of Synesius may be gathered from the letters of Sidonius. Writing to Eucherius about seventy years later he condoles with his friend as follows:

‘It is abundantly clear that the recognition which the state owes you is now long overdue. Yet what is there to wonder at in this, when a race of uncivilized allies

Both Synesius and Aurelian, his influential friend, were obviously animated by the same patriotic spirit ; both ancient Romans at heart. As far as the address in favour of the Cyrenaica is concerned, the envoy succeeded in obtaining all that he had asked for in the form of reduction of taxes and other details, but the results of his efforts were all swept away by the banishment of Aurelian, and it was not until his protector had been reinstated in favour that he again succeeded in obtaining some of the concessions that he had sought.

We must now speak of another work of Synesius, published probably in the year 400, which throws a somewhat lurid light upon the events which were taking place in Constantinople. This is the *Egyptian Tale, or Concerning Providence*. In this work, under the guise of an allegory, a mythical story, the scene of which is laid in Egypt, the author has given us a sketch of the history of these troublous years as well as his own views on certain philosophic questions. It is with the former part of the narrative that we are at present concerned.

The historical incidents underlying this story are somewhat as follows. Aurelian is here described as having fallen into disgrace and banishment through the ill will of his brother Caesarius. The wife of the latter also is accused of having plotted against Aurelian with the aid of the wife of Gainas, the commander-in-chief of the Goths. Gainas at this time had his head-quarters in Constantinople, and he was at this moment engaged in putting down a rebellion of some followers of his in the country without. Then, according to the story, the wife of Caesarius accused Aurelian privately to the wife of Gainas of secretly assembling the Romans for military service, with the object of driving the Goths from the country, and she advised her to incite her countrymen to revolt while still in possession of their arms, and to help her husband Caesarius to return to power. She even attempted to persuade Gainas to set fire to Constantinople, but this he refused to do. It must be pointed out here, after Grützmacher, that the narrative of Synesius in this *Egyptian Tale* does not coincide with the account of the other historians, who make the ambitious Gainas the real mover in the plot. Gainas, who was now in Chalcedon with his troops, sent Arcadius a summons to open up negotiations with him. The feeble Emperor, without troops to support directs the Roman power, yes, and bids fair to bring it crashing to the ground? Ep. iii. 8. (Dalton's translation, vol. i, p. 75.)

him, proceeded to Chalcedon and received Gainas in audience. The latter demanded that the consul Aurelian should be surrendered to him with some others, who were leaders of the anti-Gothic faction of the court. Aurelian, to quote from the *Egyptian Tale*,¹ 'for the sake of the country, of its sanctuaries, of its laws, gave himself up to the very enemies who threatened to destroy all these unless he were placed in their power'. Synesius furthermore states that Caesarius was the instigator² of this—Caesarius now

¹ Synesius' veiled history of the events in Constantinople, the *Egyptian Tale*, is one of his most remarkable works. It begins with the following words, which contain a hint of the allegorical nature of the story: 'This fable is Egyptian. The Egyptians transcend in wisdom. Perhaps, therefore, this also being a fable obscurely signifies something more than a fable, because it is Egyptian. If, however, it is not a fable but a sacred discourse, it will deserve in a still greater degree to be told, and committed to writing.' We are next introduced to the two sons of Taurus, Typhos and his younger brother Osiris, the first of whom is endowed with every evil quality, the other with every virtue. When the time comes for the election of a king of Egypt, Osiris wins all the votes both from the gods, who are present at the election, and from men. After initiating Osiris into the mysteries of kingship, his father Taurus and the gods warn him that he must banish the evil Typhos from the kingdom. This advice, however, he will not take, being actuated by generous motives. At first Egypt is happy and prosperous, but little by little the demons who infest the earth lay their plots, and use the wicked Typhos as their tool. The wife of Typhos corrupts the wife of the commander of the Scythians, who conspires against Osiris. The latter is finally overthrown and sent into exile. A philosopher, a stranger in the country (Synesius, of course), alone proclaims the virtues of Osiris everywhere and predicts his return. Thus ends Book I. Book II takes us through the historic scenes described above, the flight of the Scythians from Thebes (Constantinople), the massacres, and the rest. Then we have the trial of Typhos, who is condemned by a mixed tribunal of gods and men, the triumphant return of Osiris, and an account of how Egypt reverted to the Golden Age once Osiris was the ruler again. Some reflexions follow on the instability of human destiny and the duty of the sage 'to whom God has given to know the mysteries of the future, to keep silence concerning them', for in the words of Pindar (*Olympian*, i. 35):

The days that follow after are the wisest witnesses.

² In the identification of the characters in the *Egyptian Tale*, the most difficult to decide is that of Typhos. Druon is positive that Gainas, the Gothic general, is intended. Crawford, after weighing the evidence, concludes by declaring that the riddle of the identity of Typhos is insoluble. Grützmacher, following Seeck, concludes strongly for Caesarius, who took Aurelian's place when he was banished and was in turn succeeded by the latter. All scholars are agreed in recognizing Aurelian in the portrait of Osiris. It would look as if the Scythian commander was Gainas. In the appendix to his edition of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, III, p. 532, J. B. Bury gives a *résumé* of O. Seeck's results, to which I refer the

praefect in place of Aurelian. A reign of corruption at once set in, but there was one man at least whom the corruptions of this period left untouched—Synesius himself. He goes on to tell us that he wrote poems in the Doric style in honour of Aurelian, but that motives of delicacy restrained him from publishing them as long as Aurelian was in power. The only use that he made of these poems was to recite them before Caesarius during his term of office, and again he affirms that he pronounced a panegyric on Aurelian in the presence of Caesarius himself. The latter revenged himself by revoking everything that had been granted to Cyrene by Aurelian. But, as has been said above, what was lost in this term of office was regained in the next, when in another year Aurelian made his triumphant return. One of the first steps of Caesarius was to obtain a church for the Arian Goths, who had been forbidden by Theodosius to hold assemblies within the city walls. Arcadius, under the influence of S. John Chrysostom, had also been opposed to this. Orthodoxy was in alliance with the patriotic Roman party as against the Goths. Such was the state of affairs when a bolt fell from the blue sky.

At the moment when the storm broke upon Constantinople on the 11th and 12th of July in the year 400, a part of the Gothic army was inside the walls of the town, another was encamped outside, their commander Gainas himself residing about a mile from the city. It appears that for some obscure reason the Goths, including their chief, were seized

reader. He has succeeded in making out a very strong case for the identification of Typhos with Caesarius. He concludes that the office of Typhos in the story is clearly that of a praetorian praefect. Now Eutychianus appears as holding that office (1) along with Caesarius while Eutropius was in power; (2) along with Aurelian 399-400; (3) along with Aurelian when he was restored in 402. It may be assumed that he held it also between 400 and 402. It would follow that Caesarius, whom we find praetorian praefect from 396-398, and again in 400 and 401, was the prototype of Typhos, the son of Taurus and the brother of Aurelian. Some other points may confirm the conjecture. The tendency to Arianism, of which Typhos is accused, is illustrated by *Cod. Theodos.* xvi. 5. 25, and the passion of Typhos for his wife by a notice in Sozomen ix. 2. If Typhos is not meant for Caesarius, it would seem that he must be purely fictitious. Seeck points out that in the allegory Typhos is in close alliance with the barbarian mercenaries and instigates their attack on Thebes; that he had filled the post, which gave him patronage in distributing offices, powers of taxation, &c. 'These hints, taken along with the mention of torch-bearing attendants, suggest that the office was no less than that of praetorian praefect. It would follow then that Typhos was praetorian praefect before 399 and again in 400.' The rest of the demonstration follows from these facts and inferences.

with a sort of panic, and during the night packed up their belongings and hurried down to the gates of the town, with heavily laden horses and mules. Synesius relates in his story how early in the morning an old beggar-woman near the gates fell to upbraiding the soldiers, accusing them of ingratitude in leaving defenceless a city where they had been treated with so much consideration. A Goth, infuriated at her reproaches, made for her with his sword, as though to kill her, when a Roman dashed in and slew the Goth, and then another, after which the fight became general, for the news spread like wildfire that the Goths had revolted and were sacking the city. The Gothic soldiers poured out of the gates panic-stricken, while within the walls those who remained fell to the fury of the populace. The lurid description of Synesius is so detailed that it certainly gives a presumption that he was an eye-witness of the events he is describing. Once masters of the gates and separated from the enemy by the wall, the Romans turned their attention to the foreign element within. Scattered here and there, all the barbarians were cut down; they were done to death by arrows, clubs, and lances. If they succeeded in gaining the shelter of churches they were suffocated with smoke in the very precincts themselves, along with their priests, 'verily like wasps', as the author has it. . . . 'The mob heeded no one any longer, recognized no leaders, the gods alone directed it; every man was at once officer and soldier, and commanded and obeyed none other than himself.'¹

An avalanche of rage against the Goths had been loosened. The infuriated mob besieged the house of Caesarius. He must bring back their Aurelian, he must leave the praefect's chair. The wretched man temporizes, he sends his messengers to the barbarians without, he offers them gold to return, but in vain. Gainas will have none of it, and openly declares war.²

The people called meetings and begged for the return of Aurelian; the gods themselves deposed the wicked Caesarius. The return of Aurelian is a great festival, the people receive him with heads crowned with garlands, at night there are great rejoicings, torchlight processions and the like. At one moment the High Priest who, of course, is the Emperor Arcadius, moves mysteriously as behind a veil in the narrative. I have thus

¹ *Egyptian Tale*, ii. 3 (p. 1268 A).

² His force was annihilated by Arcadius' general Fravitta, a Goth himself, but a Hellenist and pagan by professed faith. Synesius, however, says nothing of this.

enumerated the principal events touched upon in the *Egyptian Tale*, stripping them of their allegorical cloak. The scene of the drama narrated therein is laid at Thebes in Egypt, and the two chief actors are Osiris and Typhos, the sons of Taurus. These brothers I have identified with Aurelian and Caesarius.

It seems curious that none of the letters of Synesius contains any account of the terrible events which transpired during the time which he passed at Constantinople, and that the only reference he makes to them is to be found in this cryptic work the *Egyptian Tale*, a part of which is devoted to philosophic speculations which we shall attempt to deal with later. It would seem as if the statesman were still submerged in the philosopher, and as if the more intimately tragic events, of which at a later date his own home in Cyrene was the centre, were destined to bring out his full character as a man of action. At Constantinople he was surrounded by friends. Apart from Aurelian he was intimate with Paeonius, to whom he addresses the letter on the gift of an astrolabe. This personage was a power at the court, and no doubt of great use to him. Then the letters introduce us to a certain Troilus, a sophist of renown, to whom he has addressed six letters in all, and who seems to have rendered him important services on several occasions.

Again, an intimacy sprang up between himself and Pylaemenes, one that lasted during the rest of his life. Proclus¹ we also hear of, as well as Eucharistus and Photius. There must have been agreeable moments for Synesius in the imperial city during his three years' sojourn. We hear about the Panhellenion at which he met other friends, such as Theotimus and Nicander and Anastasius.² This institution existed in many Greek cities at this period. It was a sort of literary meeting-place where papers were read and discussions entered into. But the Panhellenion of Constantinople was a far different thing from that of Cyrene or Alexandria.

'At Alexandria', says Lapatz, 'one keeps clear of business affairs. That would be soiling! One takes one's fill of contemplation. One plunges oneself into mysticism, the perfume of the desert is there. On the other hand, the Greek of Constantinople, enamoured of the glitter or of the comforts of public office, pushes himself up to the praefect's

¹ Epp. 70. 129. Proclus was the host of Synesius' family at Constantinople as Theodorus at Alexandria. Lapatz, 349.

² Epp. 100.

chair by his pen, or by his oratory. He is a sophist or a scholar very much as he might have been a journalist or a lawyer.

'If he is a poet he sings to the minister in power or the Emperor; he becomes a court poet; how far we are from the mystic hymn of Synesius! Such preoccupation with things of this world scandalizes our Libyan. He takes in hand the conversion of his friends in Constantinople very seriously and very heroically. He proves to them even to the point of demonstration that they are mistaken, that they were created and brought into the world to philosophize, and that in spite of this they are on the road to perdition. One might call him the apostle of philosophy.'¹

One would like to linger over this period of the life of Synesius. Unfortunately he has given us very little wherewith to fill up the details in the picture of these three years. In spite of the brilliant and interesting society in the midst of which he was thrown, he seems to have carried away painful recollections of this time. 'Would that the gods had granted', he exclaims in his essay *On Dreams*, 'that I had never lived through those three accursed years!' We now come to the moment of his departure for Cyrenaica, the date of which is disputed, but seems to have been either 400 or 402. He left Constantinople quite suddenly in consequence of an earthquake. It was about this time that he wrote his *Eulogy of Baldness*—a satire written in reply to a work by Dion Chrysostom, entitled *The Eulogy of Hair*. This work he sent to his friends at Constantinople, and it was therefore after his return that the book must have been written. Druon places the date of this work at 401 or 402, but Grützmacher, taking the view that Synesius left the capital in 402,² would place it somewhat later.

If we adopt Grützmacher's chronology, it is more likely that when he finally left Constantinople he proceeded directly to Alexandria. In that case Letter 124, addressed to Hypatia, in which he gives so lurid a picture of the war devastations of his own country, cannot be placed at the date 401, to which Druon attributes it. I am more inclined to the

¹ Lapatz, 363.

² In Letter 123, addressed to his friend Troilus of Constantinople, he says that on his return to his own country from Egypt he read a two years' accumulation of letters. Now, according to the latest calculations obtained by Grützmacher from a contemporary astronomer, and based upon chronological details gathered from Letter 4, this return could not have taken place at any other time than in January 404. Thus we have an indirect proof, but an important one, that Synesius left Constantinople in 402.

view of Grützmacher on the date of his sudden departure from Constantinople, from a passage to be found in this letter, in which he passionately declares that he will never leave his country or the tombs of his ancestors, and I should be more inclined to place it in the year 405. Be this as it may, this residence in Alexandria, beginning in 402 or 403, was an important time in his life, for it was here that he contracted his marriage. His great friend and protector, Theophilus, the Archbishop of Alexandria, performed the ceremony. We must assume that his wife was a Christian, or else that at this time he had been converted to Christianity. Nothing is known about his wife, not even her name. Great interest attaches to her from the fact that at a later period he stoutly refused to accept a separation from her when the bishopric of Ptolemais was offered to him. Although contrary opinions have been expressed about his ultimate decision, there is no conclusive evidence on the point. The archbishop Theophilus was destined, as will appear, to play an important part in his life, for it was he who relentlessly insisted on his friend taking over the bishopric. Robertson, founding his opinion of Theophilus on what he has drawn from Socrates and Sozomen, describes him as 'bold, crafty, unscrupulous, corrupt, rapacious, and domineering'. He seems to have had a great influence on Synesius, and it would be interesting to know whether his conversion was in any measure due to him. Druon thinks that it was about this time (403) that the Hymns 4, 5, and 6 were written, the Hymns 1 and 2 belonging to an earlier period in his life, probably about the year 396.

I agree, however, with those writers who place the Hymns at the close of the author's life. It is, perhaps, time to call attention to this poetical side of his literary work. Certainly the Synesius that we know in the Hymns has mingled paganism and Christianity in the most disconcerting way. Take, for instance, the following passage from the ninth Hymn :—

'O lovely and glorious, blessed Son of the Virgin of Solyma, To Thee I sing. . . . Thou didst descend even to the earth, to dwell amongst men whose life is but a day; Thou didst descend to the nether regions where Death holds thousands of hosts of souls. The old man, the ancient of days, Hades, trembled with terror, his voracious hound slunk away from the threshold. . . . When Thou didst mount to the Heavens, O King, countless hosts of demons, dwelling throughout the air, shivered with fear, and the immortal choir of holy stars was seized with wonder. . . .

The morning star smiled, the herald of the day, and the bright star of evening, the star of Cytherea. The moon, with illumined disk, was first to advance, guiding the Gods of the night. The sun spread before Thy august footsteps His glittering locks, He recognized the Son of God, the creating intelligence, the source whence he draws his own fires.'

This mingling of pagan and Christian imagery is a singular phenomenon to latter-day Christians. It can only be explained by referring to the conditions of a period in which one form, or rather several forms, of religion were fast disappearing, and another form continually gaining in power and continually making new proselytes. Apparently also there was a movement amongst Neoplatonic philosophers which aimed at a combination or unification of religious beliefs, at a formula, so to speak, that would take in many, if not all.¹

At least such was the manifest trend of the philosophy of Philo of Alexandria; and Clement, on the Christian side, seems to have been working in the same direction.

Again, we find Ammonius Saccas and Numenius in the second and third centuries imbued with a similar spirit. But it was Plotinus, born at the beginning of the third century, a pupil of Ammonius, who attempted to systematize the teachings of his predecessors and to reduce their philosophic conceptions to a more definite form. Proclus, born in 400, was perhaps the most perfect exponent of the Neoplatonic school. 'In some points where he (Synesius) differed from Plotinus', Crawford observes, 'we can find traces of the fact that he agreed more nearly with Proclus. Though only a humble link, he is yet perhaps a link in the chain of development which ended in the masterly and artistic system of the principal representative of the second, or Athenian, period of Neoplatonism.'²

The tendency already alluded to in Neoplatonic thought is observable in the passage from the 9th Hymn quoted above, as in the works of Proclus himself, and this goes to show that Synesius' mind was in a current of philosophic or religious thought which culminated in the doctrines of

¹ A cosmopolitan syncretism, in the third century, began to overlay the earlier national religions, and to embrace the Syro-Hellenic and the Western cults in a synthesis which regarded all deities as so many varied expressions of the One, and all rites as more or less acceptable forms of approach to this central, all-pervasive Deity.—Hastings, *Encycl. of Religions and Ethics*, xii, p. 157 A.

² p. 59.

this philosopher, and was not finally extinguished until the schools of Athens were closed in 529 by the edict of the Emperor Justinian.

A philosophy that aimed consciously or unconsciously at a reconciliation or unification of religious beliefs, would find nothing jarring in the confusion of imagery in the Hymn that we have just quoted. Proclus is described in the words of a modern philosopher and admirer of his work, as one 'from whom shone in no irregular or uncertain rays, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, Plotinus, Porphyry, and Jamblichus, who had so comprehended all religions in his mind and paid them such equal reverence, that he was, as it were, the priest of the whole Universe'.¹ 'Philo, Clement, and Plotinus', says Crawford, 'are, indeed, men who at the base of their creed hold essentially antagonistic convictions; but in the method pursued by them . . . they are all at one. The Jew, the Christian, and the Pagan are all Platonists.'²

In all the Hymns pagan imagery is more abundant than Christian. 'We must not seek in the Hymns', says Druon, 'the precise and rigid definition of a system (of philosophy). . . . Assailed by every doctrine at one and the same time, he not only blends in them the ideas of the Gnostic with the speculations of the Alexandrian, but also mingles in them aspirations towards Christianity, the language of which he stammers before he has accepted the dogmas.' Certainly no consistent system of philosophy could be got out of those poems, and as they stand they are a veritable religious Tower of Babel. To our modern way of thinking verse is scarcely a happy form for the expression of philosophic thought, although pre-Socratic philosophy began in this way, and in the poems of Synesius religious aspiration is inextricably mingled with philosophy. The poems take the form of aspirations of a somewhat vague description in which the poet has been stifled by the philosopher and the philosopher in turn by the poet. The same criticism has been made upon Lucretius. But Synesius has chosen a metre which seems much less suited to philosophic expositions than the hexameter, for they are written in the short Anacreontic lines, such as the following:

Darkness lay, obscure and pregnant,
Hidden in the lap of Aether,

¹ Victor Cousin.

² p. 50.

While on purest fire she rested,
Where the Moon revolves in glory.¹

or as in the following :

Let me behold Thy
Radiant glory.
Then will I clearly
Sound forth Thy praises,
Thou the soul's healer,
Healer of bodies.

But to return to the content of the Hymns, amidst their dissonances of imagery one is struck with the ever-recurring conception of matter as the enemy of the soul and of the body, a base prison in which this fettered soul awaits its escape to reunite itself with God ; and continually recurring, also, is the idea of a division of the personality of the Supreme Being into three. We have here a Platonic or Socratic doctrine, intertwined with a reflexion from Christian theology ; then, again, the peopling of the Cosmogony with innumerable demons, and a distinct touch of sun-worship hinted at in the Hymn which I have quoted above. All this produces the impression that Synesius was an eclectic, as it were, in religion, or what he would describe as philosophy, for the two seem to be identical in his mind. To be the priest of all religions was rather what the ideals of Synesius as expressed in the Hymns would seem to approach, and this is consistent with other matter that appears in the Letters. Speaking of the time that he passed in Constantinople, he tells us in the third Hymn that he entered the temples—churches, of course, these—and prayed to God at the sacred altars. The passage of the third Hymn runs as follows :

‘O Ruler of the great universe, to fulfill this vow I come from Thrace, where for a span of three years I dwelt nigh unto the royal palace, the roof of the world. Labours there I bore and I bore travail full of tears, on my shoulders supporting my motherland. Drenched was the ground with the sweat of my limbs as they struggled from one day unto another, and my couch was moist from the fountains of my weeping eyes. From one night to another to temples as many as have been raised, O King, to thy

¹ I quote from Miss Alice Gardner's beautiful translations in verse of Hymns 2 and 10 in her monograph on Synesius in *The Fathers for English Readers* (S.P.C.K., London, 1886).

sacred mysteries ; to all these I repaired. Prostrate, a suppliant, I bedewed the threshold with my tears that my journey should not have been in vain, and I supplicated the gods that are the ministers of Thy power as many as hold the fruitful land of Thrace, and such, as on the shore against it, watch over the fields of the Chalcedonians. These Thou hast crowned with angelic lights, o King, these Thy sacred messengers. In communion with me they accepted my supplication, they accepted my many trials, what time life was not sweet to me because of my sore troubled land, but now Thou hast lifted her out of her sorrow, O King who wanest not with age, Thou ruler of the universe ; for already my soul was faltering, my limbs unstrung . . . but Thou hast given me a rest from these long labours' (ll. 427-90).

His repeated references to a threefold division of the Godhead would seem to indicate a decided leaning to Christianity, and, furthermore, the absence of any reference in his letters to his own conversion or baptism would imply that he was scarcely conscious of any radical change within himself when he formally embraced the Faith. The gap between his own Platonism as he understood it, and the faith he was embracing as he understood that, must have seemed to his singular mind as one to be bridged by a single step. 'In his four earliest Hymns', says Grützmacher, 'there is seen such a peculiar blend of Neoplatonism and Christianity that his entire conversion to the latter does not seem to be any longer far off.'¹

So much for the moment of the curious blend of religious sentiment to be found in the Hymns. Apart from this they are interesting from the vastly different opinions that have been expressed about their literary value. Synesius has possibly been over-praised as a poet by his admirers, whereas by his detractors he is scarcely recognized as a poet at all. Mrs. Browning, in her *Essays on the Christian Poets*, places him so high as to declare him to be 'the chief for all true and natural gifts of all our Greek Christian poets'. Again in her poem 'Wine of Cyprus' occur the following lines :

And we both praised your Synesius
For the fire shot up his odes.

Volkman however, a profound student of the author, thinks the poems of slight value. Mr. Glover, in a very appreciative essay on Synesius in his *Life and Letters in the Fourth Century*, agrees with Volkman, at all events in regard to 'some of them', 'for', he adds, 'their metre is very

¹ p. 128.

monotonous and their thought abstract'. Maurice Croiset¹ finds 'all his poetry mediocre. It is prolix, overburdened with formulae and repetitions . . . it never succeeds in creating the form of expression that it stands in need of.' But Villemain,² no mean authority in the criticism of lyrical poetry, formed a very different estimate, and Boissonade was not less enthusiastic in his admiration,³ as was also Poissevin.⁴

Again, Casaubon speaks of him as 'Synesius . . . *piarum Musarum delictum*'.

On the other hand, Crawford, who has made a close study of the Hymns, expresses himself as follows :

'That he wished to be considered a poet is evident from the fact of his having written hymns, tragedies, and comedies ; but that he should have realized his wish is somewhat surprising. . . . But he did write verse . . . we cannot honestly say that, as a whole, they strike us as having any very close connexion with poetry, except for the form in which they are cast.'⁵

These criticisms may seem excessive in praise or in blame. I think there are few cases in literature where such diametrically opposite views have been expressed. That Synesius had the temperament of a poet it would be difficult to deny, but there seem to me more touches of poetry here and there in his Letters than in the Hymns themselves. One might even say that he frequently writes poetry when he sets out to write prose and prose when he sets himself to write poetry.

Professor Terzaghi in his brilliant essay on Synesius, published in *Atene e Roma*,⁶ has come to the conclusion that these Hymns were

¹ *Histoire de la Littérature grecque*, p. 1049.

² 'Synésius célébrait, dans ses vers pleins d'élégance et d'harmonie, les mystères de la foi chrétienne . . . et le commencement d'une loi plus douce pour l'univers. . . . Cette couleur de métaphysique religieuse, qui est la poésie de la pensée, donne à ses accents un charme d'originalité sans lequel il n'y a point de génie.'

³ 'Nam Synesius in primis valde dignus est qui legatur ob magnam orationis poeticae copiam, verborum venustatem, sublimes sensus ac splendidos.'

⁴ 'Hymni Synesii ut lepore et nitore non cedunt Orphei aut Pindari hymnis, sic utrumque superant quod summa pietate spirant spiritum Dei.' Poissevin, *Apparatus Sacer*.

⁵ p. 193.

⁶ January, 1917. Professor Terzaghi, who has made a laborious study of the text of the author, and above all of the *clausulae*, is more discriminating in his appreciation of the Hymns, as will be seen from the following passage which I have translated from

probably written in his later years. C. Vellay also argues for the latest possible period. As, however, we are completely ignorant of the date of his death, it is impossible to say whether or not they are posterior to the last of his letters. The following passage from Vellay's interesting study I have translated as follows:

'When we examine them closely, the Hymns arrange themselves of their own accord in that part of the life of Synesius in which, wearied, torn asunder by every sort of misfortune, he became absorbed in a mysticism that devoured him. Then, and only then, do these poems appear in their true light. When seen from this angle they acquire their real significance, their historic reality, their moral vitality, and their perfect form. All the philosophy of Synesius, so varied, and so heterogeneous, is accumulated here, in memories which the poet delights in awakening and in animating anew. In the midst of the desolation of his last years, poetry brings up within him an intellectual joy, all the more vibrating that it is entirely made up of voluntary exaltation, of mirages, and of creations of his own spirit. Does not all this become plain in this work before us, a work tumultuous, full of suffering, and withal harmonious, a very ocean of affliction and hope?'

This view of the tone of thought displayed in the Hymns is an interesting one, but like all criticism and analysis of Synesius' literary work, it is purely subjective; nor is it by any means an inevitable law that the last years of a poet or thinker are a reflexion of the fantasies or thoughts of the earlier. It would be difficult to trace in Plato's *Laws* a retrospect of the doctrines of the *Republic* or the *Symposium*.¹

his essay: 'He also invoked the Muse and, we cannot deny this to him, with success. The nine Hymns which he wrote in the last years of his short but prolific life display a warmth of feeling and a power of expression not often encountered. One of them, the first (Hymn 3 in Migne), is the least beautiful. It contains long passages lacking in interest, tiresome repetitions, and an accompaniment of abstruse theology, in which Oriental mysticism, Neoplatonic speculation, and Gnostic doctrine go hand in hand. . . . On the other hand the eighth Hymn (Hymn 9 in Migne) is magnificent, wherein the poet describes the descent of Jesus to Hades, and depicts vividly the commotion of nature in face of the supernatural event. Amongst the remaining Hymns, the seventh (Migne 8) and the ninth (Migne 1) are illumined by a profound feeling at once intimate and intense.'

¹ Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff observes concerning Hymn 9, 'One must do justice to his language, which borrows so much from a foreign mythology and a syncretism of philosophical ideas. In a similar manner Art has pictured the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, although not the rising of Christ, and makes it a triumphal journey through the universe. One has only to recall Correggio's painting in the Duomo

Accepting the view that the Hymns were written in the latter part of his life, we must pass now to some works which were written in all probability in the period directly after his marriage. The first and most important of these is the *Dion*, perhaps the most finished of all his compositions. This is a work in which he has tried to indicate his line of thought in regard to philosophy, and his general attitude towards life as a man and as a philosopher. It is addressed to the child whose birth was expected in the year following, and whom he mentions as his son. 'The whole tone of his words to the boy', says Crawford, 'suggests that he was the eldest child; indeed, if he were not, such a dedication would be hard to account for. The book was, therefore, probably composed in 403. Dion Chrysostom, from whom it takes its title, was "the most eminent of the Greek rhetoricians and sophists in the time of the Roman Empire". He wrote "in pure Attic Greek".¹ Born in A.D. 40, in Bithynia, he had an interesting life of adventure, including an exile of fourteen years, and apparently was much admired by the Emperors Nerva and Trajan. Synesius, placing him as a sophist who became a real philosopher, makes an example of him as one who had gone through the whole circle of sound and unsound thinking. We shall have occasion to refer again to this work when we examine more closely the philosophic convictions of Synesius.

It was perhaps a year or two later than this, in the year 404 or 405, as Druon thinks, that he wrote his treatise *On Dreams*. This, perhaps the most curious of his works, is, so far as I know, the only one of his essays that has been translated into English in modern times. In it he extols divination as the most noble study given to man, above all the divining of dreams. Of the three great 'animated existences' in the world of the intellect, namely, soul, reason, and imagination, this last, the power of imagination, takes the first place. When purified by philosophy it becomes unerring; it holds sway in dreams, which, if divined rightly, are prophetic

of Parma. We have no difficulty in finding, from an artist's point of view, the sort of mood which would be responsive to this mingling of the clerical and the lay elements, as also the Christian and the pagan. Is it too much to ask the same licence for Synesius? Is this transcendental picture not real poetry, or really poetical, which describes how the Son of God descends to the material world, and how after His victory He wings His way across the last spheres of the Cosmos into the transcendental—His home; from the sea of life and from the harmonies of the spheres into eternity, where there is no time, no motion, and no event?

¹ p. 462.

of the future. There is so much in this work that is characteristic of the alternations of hope and misgiving which run through the letters, that I think it worth while to quote the following passage from it :

‘Of divination by dreams, each one of us is perforce his own instrument, so much so that it is not possible to desert our oracle even if we so desire. Nay, even if we remain at home it dwells there with us, if we go on a voyage it accompanies us ; it is with us on the field of battle, it is at our side in the forum, it labours with us in the fields, and barter with us in the market-place. The laws of a jealous state do not forbid it, nor would they have the power to do so, howsoever they wished it, for they have no proof against those who invoke it. How then should we be violating the law by sleeping ? A tyrant could never enjoin us not to gaze into dreams, at least not unless he actually banished sleep from his kingdom ; and it would be the act of a fool to wish for that which is impossible of fulfilment, and of an impious man to make laws which should be contrary to nature and to God. Thither then we must go, woman and man of us, young and old, the poor and the rich alike, the private citizen and the ruler, the town-dweller and the rustic, the artisan and the orator. It repudiates neither race, nor age, nor condition, nor calling. It is present to every one, everywhere, this prophetic comrade, this wise counsellor who holdeth his peace. His very self is the initiator in the mysteries and likewise is he the initiated, to announce to us good tidings in suchwise as to prolong our pleasure by seizing joy beforehand ; moreover he points out evil to the end that we may be on our guard against such, and betimes drive it from us. For whatsoever things those hopes that nourish the race of man hold out to him of use and of sweetness, and as many things as fear controls, things ominous and withal gainful, all these things are found in dreams, nor by any other thing are we so led towards hope.¹

‘And the element of hope is so abundant and so salutary in actual existence, that, as maintain the subtlest thinkers, men would not be willing to continue life only as it was theirs at the first. For they would foreswear life by reason of the terrible misfortunes abounding therein, had not Prometheus injected hopes into their nature, this drug of constancy under the influence of which they esteem whatsoever is anticipated to be more worthy of trust than that which appears already before them. And these hopes have such force that he who is bound in fetters, whenever he sets himself by the power of mind to hope, is straightway unbound. He takes

¹ Cf. Letters of Sidonius, iii. 12, to Secundus :

Hoc primum est decus, haec superba virtus,
Spe praecedere quos honore iungas,
 Quique hic sunt titulis pares parentes,
 Hos illic meritis supervenire.

the field with his troops, commands half a company and presently a whole company; he becomes a general, makes conquests and sacrifices to the gods; his head crowned with garlands he gives a banquet, in the Sicilian or the Persian style, as he will, and in truth he is forgetful of his chains as long as he dreams of being a general.

'Now all this is the waking state of the dreamer, or the dream of the awakened, for both are concentrated upon the same underlying state, to wit, the fantasy in our nature, and whenever we wish to convert this into images this one benefit is always at hand, good cheer anoints our life and, soothing our soul with wandering hope, lifts it aloft from the perception of things ill to be borne.'¹

That Synesius attached a real importance to dreams we should also gather from a passage in this work, in which he declares:

'My whole life has been passed over my books, or in the chase, excepting the period of my embassy (at Constantinople), and would to the gods that I had never lived through those three accursed years—but even then divination was of great and frequent service to me. It saved me from snares that spiritualistic sorcerers spread in my path, and saved me from all danger. . . .'²

But literary work was not destined to absorb the energies of Synesius. He returned to Cyrene at about the commencement of the year 404, only to find his native land attacked on every side by the barbarian tribes from the deserts of Libya, whose one purpose was pillage and whose favourite method of war was to overrun the country districts and keep the cities in a chronic state of siege. To add to the difficulties of the situation, a new governor of the province had just arrived in the person of Cerialis, a man without honesty, and with an unbridled passion for lucre. His administration, as might have been expected, was a veritable orgy of political corruption. Any one could get exemption from military service if he paid for it, and cities and municipalities were mulcted of revenues for payment of the troops necessary to their protection. In this way disorderly soldiery kept the unfortunate citizens in continual terror of blackmail, and they were almost equally terrified of the savage tribes without and of their own protectors within. Cyrene was besieged, and we find Synesius guarding the ramparts, or organizing sorties with what energetic fellow-citizens he could assemble. He invents and constructs a catapult for

¹ c. 8 (pp. 1304 c-1305 c).

² c. 9 (p. 1308 d).

hurling stones upon the enemy, he scours the country with scouts to learn of their movements. In the meantime Cerialis had betaken himself and his valuables to a ship in the harbour, from which safe distance he sent his orders to the besieged garrisons.

The history of this long guerilla warfare is very obscure, but one thing is apparent enough from these letters. Synesius was always to the fore. His strong, resolute character gave confidence to the wavering and hope to the despondent. His pitiless exposure of fraud and his contempt for weakness and cowardice must have made him the idol of the people of Cyrene during these tragic years. It is little to be wondered at, therefore, that when his countrymen had set their hearts on his becoming Bishop of Ptolemais, the pressure of public opinion was so strong that it became finally irresistible. But this was not to be until some years later, and in the intervening period we find him leading a life of varied action, now as a soldier on the ramparts of his city, or in the saddle, or again at his half-ruined house in the country, and in calmer moments, no doubt, following the chase with his hounds and his bow.

‘How could I endure’, he exclaims at one moment, ‘to see my bows rusting or my hounds in idleness!’

Kingsley has traced a wonderful portrait of Synesius in his immortal romance *Hypatia*. ‘The Squire Bishop’ is the title of a really admirable chapter of his story, in which he introduces his hero first as the Christian prelate, then as the leader of an ostrich hunt, and finally as the soldier, defending himself with the hunting-field at his back against an attack of the Ausurians. No picture of this fascinating and many-sided man could be better.

We have now arrived at that point of his life where the man of action has supplanted the philosopher and rhetorician. His whole spirit seems to vibrate in unison with the struggles and sufferings of those about him. Whereas the awful political tragedies which he must have witnessed during his sojourn at Constantinople seem to have scarcely touched his inner man, we notice in those of the next ten years an intimate sympathy with all that was struggling about him, and a stern determination to uphold his uncompromising ideal of the conduct of public affairs.

‘I wish to meet the enemy,’ he writes of the Ausurians, ‘I wish to see for myself what sort of men they are who dare to attack Roman citizens.’

It was in the year 405, according to Druon, that the second son of Synesius was born, and the birth must have taken place at the time when Cyrene was besieged, or shortly before. Druon thinks certain of the Hymns were written at about this time, that is, Hymn 8¹ in 405 or 406, and Hymns 7, 9, and 10, some two or three years later. There is, however, no evidence worthy of the name by which the dates can be fixed. From this time on the author does not seem to have written any more essays, although we have many delightful allusions to literature and philosophy in his letters. If we accept the date assigned by Druon to Letter 95, i.e. the year 407, it would seem that the guerilla warfare was still in progress, for in it Synesius mentions that the enemy have occupied his country seat and have turned it into a fortress against Cyrene. It would seem to have been a sort of intermittent warfare something like that which went on for centuries between the town and country tribes in Morocco, and which continued until the French occupation a few years ago brought it to a close. As in the case to which I allude, the loss of life was probably small, but there was no doubt much destruction of property, crops, and cattle.

One of the principal industries of Cyrenaica was the gathering and preparation of 'silphium'. This plant grew wild in the country, and was greatly prized by the Greeks and Romans of that period. It was exported to Athens and other ports of the Aegean, but the soil of the province had become exhausted, and it had no doubt been greatly destroyed by the savage tribes who were the curse of the country, and was now only grown in gardens. So great was the importance of this industry that most of the the coins of Cyrene, before its incorporation with the Roman Empire, represented a silphium plant. On one of these the Thessalian heroine after whom the city was named is represented with a bunch of silphium. Allusions to the cultivation of this plant are found in Letters 106 and 134.

'I asked the young man who brought me some silphium,' he writes,

¹ Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf in his essay on the *Hymns of Proclus and Synesius* (Berlin, 1907) speaks of this Hymn (Hymn 8) as having been written when Synesius had two sons, consequently before the birth of the third son and long before he was made a bishop. The phrase in the hymn is *συναρίδα τέκνων*, 'a pair of offspring'. I cannot see that this is a proof that the hymn was written when he was a layman. In the indictment of Andronicus (Ep. 57), written when he was bishop, he speaks of the death of one of his sons. The phrase quoted might equally well have been used *after* the death of this son, as we know that there were three in all.

‘whether you had grown it yourself. . . . I learned from him that your own garden which you take such care of, brought you this plant. . . .’

Synesius at this period of his life is in close touch with public affairs. A certain Julius seems to be a rival and enemy of his, opposed to him in politics and municipal administration, as we gather from Letter 95. This letter shows a keen interest in political and personal squabbles, and it hints at ambitions for public life. Again, Letter 148, which must belong to much the same period, or a year later, gives us a charming picture of life on his country estate or on one of them; the completely rural or pastoral existence—‘far from roads, far from commerce and from fraud’.¹

We now come to the most decisive years in the life of Synesius, the years in which the citizens of Ptolemais pressed him to become their bishop. This change was to plunge him at last in the full tide of public life, causing him to break definitely with the avocations for which he always professed a desire, such as retirement to a life of leisure and literary ease, and placed him in a high and overburdened public position. At first he refused the honour offered to him, partly from motives of conscience, for he could not subscribe to all the dogmas of the Church. Let it not be forgotten here that up to this point we do not even know whether he had ever been baptized or had formally become a Christian, but even then, had he accepted without difficulty a transition from his Platonic idealism to the doctrines of the Church, it was quite another matter to be suddenly pushed to the highest office the Church could bestow, without the preparation of a previous priesthood. But such was the problem before him; the situation of Cyrene was more than disquieting, the necessity was pressing. There were not merely religious questions at issue, such as the suppression of the heresy of Eunomius, but others of a political character, for the bishop was the real political leader in the province,² the real head of the army in war, and when Synesius, after many futile

¹ The description of the country in this letter does not seem to refer to any district near a city. Letter 95 speaks of a certain proximity of his house to Cyrene. It seems obvious, therefore, that he had more than one estate.

² ‘The arbitration of the bishops was ratified by a positive law; and the judges were instructed to execute without appeal or delay, the episcopal decrees, whose validity had hitherto depended on the consent of the parties. . . . The venerable Austin enjoyed the satisfaction of complaining that his spiritual functions were perpetually interrupted by the invidious labour of deciding the claim or the possession of silver and gold, of lands, and cattle.’—Gibbon, ed. Bury, vol. ii, p. 343.

attempts to thwart his destiny, accepted the bishop's investiture it was only to find in Ptolemais war both from without and within. Synesius, therefore, was forced into accepting the bishopric by political pressure, and by the determination of his friend Theophilus, the Primate of Alexandria, that he should be so consecrated. In the year 410, therefore, he repaired to Alexandria, when the investiture took place and he became Bishop of Ptolemais. But at the same time, apparently, a new enemy both to Ptolemais and to himself, looms on the horizon—Andronicus of Berenice.

To explain the part that this malignant personage played in the sad drama that was being enacted in Cyrenaica, we must keep in mind the exceptional crisis through which the unfortunate country had passed. It had been during the last quarter of a century devastated by one scourge after another—plagues of locusts, forest fires, earthquakes, wars with the savage tribes of the Libyan desert, pestilence, and famine. Nothing had been spared it. Formerly under the sphere of government of the praefect of Egypt, the helpless situation into which it had drifted had called for a separate administration of its affairs, and a governor of Ptolemais, and Ptolemais only, had been sent from Constantinople. Fortunately the choice had at first been a happy one. Gennadius, the praefect of Cyrenaica, whose term of office was drawing to an end when Synesius left for Alexandria, had won golden opinions for himself by his conduct in office ; without violence or malice towards any he had succeeded in bringing into the public treasury larger revenues than any of his predecessors. Owing to his justice and forbearance no one had grievances against him, nor was his a régime of evictions or persecutions. Far different was the case when at this juncture Andronicus, the new praefect, took over his post. This new official we hear of for the first time in Letter 73, if we read the letters in their presumed chronological order. In this letter, addressed to his friend Troilus, Synesius complains bitterly that a praefect has just been appointed to Pentapolis of Cyrene who is a native of the place, a thing quite forbidden by the laws of the Roman Empire.

‘A Phœnician’, he says, ‘cannot govern Phœnicia, or a Coele-Syrian Coele-Syria, an Egyptian may be praefect anywhere but in Egypt. Are the Libyans so superior to other races that they think it their right to infringe the law?’

The name of Andronicus of Berenice is not mentioned in this letter, but

it is easy to see that he is alluded to. This man upon whom Synesius was destined to pour the vials of his wrath, came from the town of Berenice and was the son of a fisherman. He seems to have been gifted with a faculty for intrigue and to have succeeded in obtaining influence at the court of Constantinople. It is a mystery by what means he was enabled to gain such favour as to obtain an appointment of this importance in defiance of the established law. All that we know is to be gathered from the letter already quoted and the indictment of Andronicus which, following Hercher's text, I have published as Letter 57.

Andronicus was not long in declaring himself, for his first act on arriving at Cyrene was to accuse the blameless Gennadius of political corruption, and his second to throw into prison any who refused to give the testimony he desired. It was with such a situation as this that Synesius was confronted in the first days of his episcopal office.

He at once declared war upon the evildoer. He addressed stern letters of remonstrance to him, and was not long in showing him that he meant to force him to amend his ways, or to forfeit his position as governor of the province. This struggle between the civil governor and the ecclesiastic is very typical of the political conditions of the fourth and fifth centuries. As the Church had grown in the number of its congregations, the bishops all through the Roman Empire had increased in political power and prestige. The Church had become an *imperium in imperio*, and no man could set limitations to its ultimate power, because it was on the one hand the official religion of the Empire, and because on the other hand, by the decrees of Theodosius, the celebrations of pagan rituals had been forbidden by law. But there was another thing which rendered the power of the Church peculiarly drastic. This was the right of sanctuary¹—

¹ 'The ancient privilege of sanctuary was transferred to the Christian temples, and extended, by the liberal piety of the younger Theodosius, to the precincts of consecrated ground. The fugitive, and even guilty, suppliants were permitted to implore either the justice or the mercy of the Deity and his ministers. The rash violence of despotism was suspended by the mild interposition of the church; and the lives or fortunes of the most eminent subjects might be protected by the mediation of the bishop' (Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, ch. XX. iv. § 4, ed. Bury, vol. ii, 343).

Gibbon adds a note to this: 'In the works of Fra Paolo (tom. iv, p. 192, &c.) . . . he justly observes that ancient Greece might perhaps contain fifteen or twenty *asyla* or sanctuaries: a number which at present may be found in Italy within the walls of a single city.'

a privilege which persisted with more or less success during the Middle Ages. Again, there were the terrible consequences of excommunication. We shall see with what effect these weapons were wielded in this struggle between the governor and the bishop. Andronicus at first showed nothing but contempt for his remonstrances and admonitions. He displayed a spirit of bravado, and seemed to delight in attacking not only the bishop himself but the whole body of priests ; growing more and more reckless, he sought to establish a despotic authority by openly persecuting the Christian religion itself. He challenged the sacred right of sanctuary, a right which had existed in the pagan temples, as it existed in the Christian churches at this period. He finally went to the insane length of forbidding any one whom he was persecuting to claim the right of sanctuary, and even had the audacity to post a proclamation on the church door to this effect. The bishop replied by his celebrated philippic *Against Andronicus* (Letter 57), in which he accuses him as one guilty of a second crucifixion. But all in vain ; and as there seemed no other issue, the bishop finally called his congregation into the church, and reading to them assembled together this scathing condemnation, he solemnly pronounced before them the sentence of excommunication which, if approved by his clergy, he intended to address as an encyclical letter to all the other churches. But he had reckoned without his host. For the clergy who surrounded him lacked the civic courage of their fiery leader, and when Andronicus, who was now in a state of terror, appeared before them as a suppliant and promised to amend his ways, they seem to have brought pressure upon Synesius to suspend, although he did not revoke, his sentence of excommunication. This Synesius reluctantly agreed to do. He tells Andronicus that if he amends his ways, not merely will the clergy pray that his sins may be forgiven, but will admit him again to pray in church. 'Your punishment', he says, 'is suspended or deferred according to your own future acts.' The event showed that the bishop was right in his first judgement and the clergy wrong, for Andronicus recommenced his evil courses ; in the end, the excommunication had to take place, and an encyclical letter was sent out to all the churches. The results of an excommunication in those days must have indeed been terrible, if we can judge aright from reading the terms of the sentence. 'I exhort, therefore, every private individual and ruler not to be under the same roof with them, nor to be seated at the same table,

particularly the clergy, for these shall neither speak to them while living, nor give them burial when dead.' This must have amounted to a social boycott, and, of course, would automatically render it impossible for an official to discharge the functions of his office. It would seem, therefore, that the Church by handling dexterously the right of sanctuary and the prerogative of excommunication she possessed, could always in the end get the better in the struggle. But now a curious phenomenon occurs, and is well worthy of observation, as significant of the curious moral nature of Synesius. The bishop, who has been hurling his thunderbolts at his adversary; who has described him as 'a being beyond the pale of sympathy or forgiveness by God or man'; once he sees the enemy of the Church prostrate and excommunicated by his own initiative, is the first to take pity upon him. After speaking against him with the relentless sternness of an Old Testament prophet, he seems to have been touched by the Christian spirit of forgiveness, and he writes to Theophilus, the Primate of Alexandria, in the following strain:

'The Church detested this man Andronicus on account of his crimes, but now she who had urged on his fall has taken pity on him, for that he has exceeded the measure of her malediction. . . . If your sacred person judges that this unfortunate man is worthy of any interest, I shall regard it as a signal proof that God has not yet entirely abandoned him.'¹

This letter to Theophilus has been regarded as a sign of weakness on the part of Synesius, but it may be taken rather as an evidence of his humanity of sentiment and Christian feeling.² Another side-light on his character may be found in a passage of his impeachment of Andronicus. It would seem from this that he was rather anxious than otherwise to restrict the political authority of the Church and to keep it within its more purely ecclesiastical sphere. Quite consistently with this doctrine, he waited to proceed against Andronicus until the latter, by his own proceedings against the Church and violations of the right of sanctuary, had laid himself open to an attack from the religious side. 'I have waited', he says to his congregation, 'to make you convinced with me by the logic of facts that to join together the political with the ecclesiastical

¹ Ep. 90.

² Gibbon, on the other hand, says, 'the descendant of Hercules enjoyed the satisfaction of raising a prostrate tyrant from the ground'. See Letter 90; *Decline and Fall*, ch. XX. v.

forces is to combine the uncombinable. Past ages made the same men priests and judges. Then later . . . God separated their lives. One was appointed to the priestly and the other to the governing order.'¹ Druon remarks² that a complete separation of the temporal and spiritual powers was not as yet in the popular mind; that the direct temporal action of the bishops was not only useful but often necessary. This, at all events, was the view of the Emperors, for they were always calling the bishops to their assistance and, indeed, made a sort of magistracy of them. He thinks that the disinclination of Synesius to take a part in the political functions of his office was caused purely by his philosophic disdain of whatever concerned the masses. I cannot quite read this into the passage in question. Whether such a feeling was contributory to the doctrine he expresses on this point it would be impossible to say, but the statement he makes expresses a view which was certainly a very advanced one for his time, and, as we are aware, a view that has not been entirely realized as yet by Christendom.

But there is another reason why I attribute a great importance to this interesting passage. It seems to me to dispose of the view that its author was moved by political ambition in his acceptance of the episcopate. If he had been actuated by any such motive, is it likely that he would have made such a public statement before his whole congregation? It would have turned out a terrible weapon for a political enemy to attack him with, at some subsequent time, if he ever pushed his powers in the path of governmental ambition.

No doubt his victory over Andronicus had the effect of winning over to him the complete devotion of the inhabitants of Pentapolis. His independence of character led him even to take part against his friend and protector Theophilus, the Primate of Alexandria, at least on one occasion. The influence that Theophilus unquestionably exercised over him is one of the most paradoxical episodes in his life, for the character of this illustrious prelate was not such as we should imagine would have commended itself to Synesius. But the latter seems to have regarded him not merely with affection, but with something akin to veneration. It was inevitable,

¹ *Epist.* 57 (p. 668 c, Hercher). Cf. *De Regno*, cap. XIII.

Synesius might have quoted [Herodotus, IV. 161] the history of his own city. Cf. also Aristotle's *Politics*, Newman, vol. iii, p. 277.

² Druon, pp. 48-9.

however, that they should not always see eye to eye, and Synesius, in the case which I am about to describe, did not hesitate to insist upon his own point of view with his superior. Saint John Chrysostom had appointed a certain Alexander, a native of Pentapolis, to a diocese in Bithynia, and had consecrated him bishop of Pasilinopolis. As Theophilus and St. John belonged to opposite parties, the former, who had at that time gained the upper hand in this rivalry, removed Alexander from his see, but this bishop chose to live in Ptolemais, not returning to Basilinopolis, and at the same time declining to admit the validity of his ejection. Many of his colleagues in the Church treated Alexander with obvious disrespect, but Synesius himself, although declining to recognize his episcopal character, and ignoring him in church, continued to treat him in private life with respect, and even entertained him in his own house. He pressed Theophilus for a statement of what his conduct should be in this and similar cases, but could get no reply. In lieu of a statement from his superior, he decided to treat Alexander in his house as a bishop, and in the church as a layman, but it is an interesting sidelight on his character that he did not hesitate to continue in the most friendly personal relations with a man who had been dishonoured by Theophilus. That Synesius was little instructed in the doctrines of the Church there can be little doubt. He himself complains of his lack of knowledge and instruction in the Christian theology, and, what was more serious, that older priests than himself, from whom he asked assistance, confessed to him that they were equally ignorant of these matters.¹ However, we find him struggling with the heresy of the Arians and again of the Eunomians, whom he charges with coming to Pentapolis on the pretext of engaging in commercial affairs, but in reality to make a propaganda of their heretical doctrines. Against these he orders the sternest measures of expulsion, but at the same time—and here his sense of humanity and justice is most apparent—he forbids that they should in any way be despoiled of their property before leaving the country. His conversion is most apparent in the fact that he founds a convent, and congratulates those of his friends who enter upon a monastic life.²

But the anxieties of warfare were again to trouble the country, and in

¹ Ep. 66.

² Ep. 147 ; cf. *De Regno*, 13.

the year 410 or thereabouts it would seem that the tribes of the desert were again becoming troublesome, as we gather from the long letter (Ep. 67) in which he narrates the affairs of Palaebisca and Hydrax. He speaks in this letter of having proceeded through a part of the country where the enemy were in force. This mission he undertook at the desire of Theophilus. Its object was to adjust a difference that had arisen between Paul, the Bishop of Erythrum, and Dioscurus, the Bishop of Darnis.¹ It seems that an old fortress was on the frontier of the dioceses of these two prelates, and that a demand from Paul for the possession of it having been refused by Dioscurus, the former got into the place stealthily, and, setting up an altar within the precincts, went through all the forms of consecration, after which he declined to give the place up. Synesius brushed away this ecclesiastical quibble on the ground that Christianity is not a religion of empty ceremony, and that the consecration which had been carried out in such an obviously wrong spirit could not be valid in the eyes of Christians as a claim to possession. It is interesting to note that in his very lucid and trenchant argument on this point he touches upon the Platonic doctrine that whatever is holy must be just. The consecration was, in his eyes, effected in an unjust form, by fraud and stratagem, and therefore could have no part in sanctity. But the bishops, Paul and Dioscurus, decided to come to an agreement, and it was finally settled between them that Paul should be left in possession of the fortress, and that he should compensate Dioscurus for the loss of his property.

Paul, the Bishop of Erythrum, seems to have been greatly loved by the people of Palaebisca. Theophilus had charged Synesius to restore this see to its former position of independence. It had, it would seem, in some way drifted into the control of the bishop of Erythrum. Synesius accordingly called the people to a general assembly, and urged them to proceed to the election of a bishop of their own. This proposal was met with such a storm of protest that he was finally obliged to adjourn the meeting. Every one protested the most fervent devotion to the bishop Paul. He called another meeting five days later, but with no greater success, and finally gave way to the prayers of the people of the district, touched apparently by their fidelity to their beloved lord. He promised

¹ 'Dardanis' wrongly *edd.*, as also in certain MSS. of Ptolemy.

to take a petition from them to Theophilus, in which they begged him to reconsider his decision. We do not know what success attended this petition, for there is no further allusion to the matter in the letters.

The Ausurian tribes were again pressing upon Cyrenaica, but a new Roman commander had now appeared upon the scene. This was Anysius, a man after Synesius' own heart, to whose qualities both as a citizen and a soldier he pays the highest tribute in his discourse against Andronicus (Letter 57). According to Synesius' account of the military operations, Anysius defeated the barbarians in a narrow defile with a detachment of only forty Unnigardae, a race of soldiers to whom he gives unlimited praise (Letter 78). It is impossible to come to any just appreciation of the military situation in Cyrenaica, if it can be called military in the proper sense of the word. We have lurid pictures of it both in the Letters and the Catastases—burned homesteads, crops destroyed, the ground strewn with corpses, desolation and despair—these are the most frequent images. Side by side with these glimpses of the horrors of war, we are introduced to a general who obtains a signal victory with an army of forty men, and regret is freely expressed that he had not two hundred with him, in which case he would have been able to carry the war into the enemy's country! In Letter 78, addressed to Anysius, he estimates the numbers of the enemy at over a thousand, a force completely routed by this little band, a mere corporal's guard.¹ 'Supplicate the Emperor', he writes to Anysius, 'to send us one hundred and sixty more of these admirable Unnigardae. . . . With a commander such as you they would quickly make an end of the Ausurians.' The story reads like a tale of the exploits of Fernando Cortez, but it is far less plausible, for there was no such inequality of arms as existed between the Spaniards and Aztecs. 'I have already got three hundred lances,' he tells us in Letter 108, 'and as many curved knives . . . we shall have clubs too; . . . some of us have single-edged axes, each man carries one in his belt.' The arsenal seems rather primitive, and not very extensive. I cannot offer any explanation of these extraordinary statements about numbers of men and implements.

The joy expressed by Synesius at the exploits of his hero Anysius does

¹ See the note to Ep. 78, where I have transcribed a similar passage from the letters of Sidonius Apollinaris, Bishop of Clermont in the fifth century, in which the numbers engaged in a battle are still more absurdly disproportionate.

not seem to have been very long-lived, at least if we can trust the evidence of the second *Catastasis*. This document, the date of which Druon fixes at 412, after Anysius had been succeeded by Innocentius, gives a very gloomy account of the situation, military and other. Lapatz thinks that it was a letter to some person unknown, but that from its fiery and oratorical style it has been mistaken for a speech. This suggestion would be more plausible if there were anything in this very interesting document that would suggest another personality in the distance, such as always appears in some form in the letters of Synesius. Most commentators, beginning with Petavius, take it to be an address of some sort delivered on an occasion unknown to us. Another discourse of the same sort, *Catastasis I*, was probably delivered earlier, perhaps directly after the victory of Anysius. Both these speeches agree with what can be gathered from those letters which we have surmised to be of the same year or years. Their chief value from an historical point of view is drawn from this evidence that they were addressed to an audience, for this would be a presumption of their accuracy as statements of the conditions which existed at the time of their delivery. The first seems to show unmistakable signs of being intended as war propaganda, an attempt to awaken citizens from a state of apathy, as is suggested by his appeals to 'sense of shame', 'sense of honour', and the like. I quote here some passages from the first *Catastasis*:

'Blessed be the memory of Anysius. He has made us live a year longer by employing the shields of all men and the strong arm of the Unnigardae for our necessity. There has been at all events a respite to our disaster, for the whole multitude of the enemy has not poured over our country; they have changed their formation into that of marauding bands; they take to flight and then turn up again elsewhere. They have been defeated in three battles, and dare not now challenge us to a general engagement, but cavalry squadrons none the less ride over our fields, and our troops keep themselves behind their fortifications, scattered over the country in small divisions—the very evil, this, that we suffered in the days of Cerialis; nor are they of much use to each other, because they are not near enough to be in touch. It is sad to admit that through all these reasons the lot of our enemies is still a fortunate one, for whereas a year ago they were quick to take to flight, now it is they who are the besiegers, and having destroyed our village fortifications they encircle our cities. What is there that does not turn out to their advantage? The Ausurians attire themselves in the breastplates of the Thracian cavalry, not from any need of them, but to make a jest of us. They even employ the shields of the Marcomani.

The Roman heavy-armed forces have become mere light infantry, and they only owe their existence to the compassion of the enemy. In tears I deplore the lot of these men : I do not reproach them for their unfortunate position, for what could the Unnigardae do against such vastly superior forces, and when isolated detachments of them encounter masses of the enemy ? It is only by the grace of God and by their valour and experience in warfare that they have survived at all. . . .¹

It will be noticed that in the following extract from the same speech his view of the military and political situation becomes even more despondent. It is difficult to believe that so obviously courageous a character as that of Synesius could have been daunted by the fortunes of war, and one can only imagine that he had some motive, of which we are ignorant, for addressing his auditors as follows :

‘What enemy would not delight in a war that involved so little danger ? I am overwhelmed with shame at my very fears for the present age and for the Empire. Alas, for that ancient Roman spirit which was wont aforetime to conquer all obstacles, everywhere, which joined up far-separated continents with its trophies, and now is in danger of losing the Greek cities of Libya to a nomad race, and perchance Egyptian Alexandria also ! Is it of less consequence that we should lose our prestige and our glory than our wealth and possessions ? Surely not for any one who has a sense of shame and sets any store upon honour. Alas, for the audacity of these enemies, girt with which they have covered our whole province as though with a net. No mountain is inaccessible to them, nor is any strong place secure. They overrun the country ; they explore every corner of it, and they reduce young and old to slavery. Once, long ago, I read in some Greek historian the following words :

“THE ENEMY LEFT THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN AS A PROOF OF
THE DESTRUCTION THEY HAD WREAKED IN THE WAR”,

but the case of Pentapolis is quite different from this. For what can be a richer booty to the Ausurian than the woman and the child, that the former may bear him other children, and that the latter, when of age, may join his army ? For we love more those who protect us than those who have brought us into the world. Alas, for the ill-fated colony that we have reared ! A youthful generation is growing up in captivity which will augment the armies of our foe ; a hostile people is at some time sure to attack the country again. . . . Pentapolis has succumbed ; it is finished ; it is dead ; it exists no longer either for us or for the Emperor. For the Emperor a province which brings back nothing is worse than useless, and lo, who may collect

¹ p. 1568 A-B.

fruit from such a desert? For myself I have no longer a country to abandon. . . .'

The picture grows ever more lurid as the speaker proceeds :

'Unhappy Ptolemaïs,' he exclaims, 'of which I shall have been the last priest! The horror of it is ever with me. I can speak no longer, tears choke my voice. . . . I am called to the ship, I must embark ; but I shall ask to linger a little longer, I shall go first to the church of God, I shall make the circuit of the altar, I shall water the pavement with my tears. . . . How many times calling upon God shall I turn my head ! how many times shall I pass by the railings of the sanctuary ! But necessity is a mighty thing, and all powerful. I long to give to my eyes sleep uninterrupted by the sound of the trumpet. How much longer shall I mount guard upon the ramparts, how much longer shall I patrol the intervals between the turrets? I am weary of posting the night patrols ; guarding others and guarded myself in turn. I, who held many a vigil of old to watch for the announcements of the stars, am now exhausted watching for the attacks of the raiders. We sleep for a span measured by the water of the clepsydra, and the alarm-signal most often breaks into that very one allotted to me. For us alone are the words of Hesiod vain, to wit, that Hope remains within the casket, for we are without courage, and expectant of evil.'

We now arrive at the last years of the life of Synesius. The pathetic letter to Hypatia (Letter 16) is held by Druon to have been written during his last illness in 413, and, if such is the case, it is of itself a sufficient comment on the double tragedy before us, the passing of a once famous Greek colony of the Roman Empire, an ancient seat of learning, philosophy, culture, and art, and the passing of its last great citizen and philosopher.

'In any event', as a modern writer has said, 'the philosopher dies ; philosophy dies ; and their ashes blend and are swept into space by the four winds of heaven.'¹

Before leaving the subject it is worth while, perhaps, to examine more closely what were the sources of that 'philosophy' the mention of which recurs so persistently in the letters of Synesius, and to what extent, if at all, it influenced him as a man of action, or affected his thoughts and ideals as an essayist or a poet—for it must not be forgotten that as a poet Synesius has a place in the history of literature. It is not my purpose to take up here the obscure problem of mysticism in general, or to attempt to unravel the causes of kindred psychical phenomena. The

¹ F. Mathews, *Taxation and the Distribution of Wealth*, p. 508.

reader will doubtless draw his own conclusions as to their significance in history, according to his religious convictions or to the school of thought or of science that he has adopted. My task in this connexion is merely to throw what light is possible on the position of this one thinker in reference to the others. Can Synesius be properly described as a mystic at all? In the sense of the word as understood by a recent Roman Catholic exponent of the subject (Dom Cuthbert Butler),¹ I can see no reason for such a description of him. We are not in the presence of a Saint Augustine or even a Plotinus or a Porphyry. There is not any evidence that he had what Butler would describe as 'quasi-mystical experiences' or even, to quote his own phrase, evidence of 'Nature ecstasy'. His Neoplatonism is rather that of the scholar, poet, and dilettante than that of the man given up to contemplation, meditation and ecstasy, nor is there a single allusion in his letters to that state of mind which is ever present in Plotinus and with which Saint Augustine is deeply impregnated. His views on dreams are of a reasoned sort—one might say that they embody a scientific hypothesis in his mind, that they are a proof to him of a physical unity in the workings of nature. All these considerations have led me to believe that the mystical Neoplatonic elements which predominate in the Hymns and in the philosophic part of the *Egyptian Tale* were not deeply rooted in his mind and soul, and that he was really more directly influenced by the works of Plato than by their Alexandrian interpreters. Miss Alice Gardner seems to have been conscious of this when she says (p. 85):

'But though his aims were as high as those of Plotinus and he expressed his aspirations in almost the same words, his healthy animal tastes led him to adopt rules of life very different from those of his master. While Plotinus could hardly bear to realize that he was subject to the necessary conditions of physical existence, Synesius aimed at keeping "a sound mind in a sound body".'

Let us turn now to Plotinus, with whose philosophy many are tempted to identify him. The following passage is typical of the extent to which exaltation takes the place of reason:

'The soul separates itself from the One (πάσχει τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀπόστασιν) and it is no longer one at all, when it acquires knowledge (ἐπιστήμην). Know-

¹ Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism* (London, 1922).

ledge is in fine a discourse (λόγος) and a discourse is multiple (πολλὰ δὲ ὁ λόγος). We must therefore pursue a course above knowledge (ὑπὲρ ἐπιστήμην δραμεῖν).¹

Ecstasy begins when the soul attains beauty. Beauty dwells in proportion. The soul seeks something higher, and searches after that which shines through proportion.¹

'As soon as the soul has received in itself this emanation of the Good . . . (sc. the emanation of Beauty) (τὴν ἐκείθεν ἀπορροήν) . . . it is troubled and enters into a phase of delirium (ἀναβακχεύεται). Desire stings it and it becomes amorous. Formerly even intellect itself moved it not, beautiful as it was, for it was a dead beauty which the light of the Good illumined not. The moment that the soul feels the gentle warmth of the Good, it gathers its forces, it awakens, and in very truth unfolds its wings. Instead of stopping short at intellect which lies before it, it raises itself, as if by some sort of reminiscence, to something different and much greater, even to the Good which it cannot surpass, for there is nothing beyond this' (Plotinus i. 6. 1).²

This then is the doctrine of ecstasy. We can go much further back in the history of the Alexandrian school and still find a similar example or

¹ 'En un mot, l'union de l'âme avec l'Infini sera une extase. On conçoit d'ailleurs que l'extase ne se produise pas du premier coup. De purifications doivent au préalable détacher l'âme du monde sensible, et la contemplation l'approcher de Dieu. Ces considérations avaient été toutes développées et d'une façon remarquable par Philon, Plutarque et Numénios. Mais Plotin les reprend et les marque fortement au coin de l'Infinité divine. Philon et Numénios n'ont rien dit, par exemple, de pareil à ce que Plotin dira sur la déification et le bonheur de l'âme durant l'extase.'—H. Guyot, *L'Infinité Divine*, p. 230, Felix Alcan, Paris, 1906. 'Dès que l'âme ressent la douce chaleur du Bien, elle prend des forces, s'éveille et déploie véritablement les ailes. Au lieu de s'arrêter à l'intelligence qui gît devant elle, elle s'élève comme par une sorte de souvenir à quelque chose d'autre et de plus grand—jusqu'au Bien qu'elle ne peut dépasser parce qu'il n'y a rien au-dessus de Lui.'—Ibid., from Plotinus, i. 6. 1.

² 'The soul is above Being, while in communion with the One. If then a man sees himself become one with the One, he has in himself a likeness of the One, and if he passes out of himself, as an image to its archetype, he has reached the end of his journey. And when he comes down from his vision, he can again awaken the virtue that is in him, and seeing himself fitly adorned in every part, he can again mount upward through virtue to Spirit, and through wisdom to God. Such is the life of gods and of godlike and blessed men; a liberation from all earthly bonds, a life that takes no pleasure in earthly things, a flight of the alone to the Alone.'—*The Philosophy of Plotinus*, by W. R. Inge, vol. ii, p. 142.

this phase of thought or, as I should prefer to call it, religious emotion. Listen to Philo in the first century, who first foreshadowed Neoplatonism :

‘If then, my soul, any desire perchance entereth into thee to become the inheritor of the treasures of heaven, leave thou not only the earth, to wit, the body, but also thy kin, which is to say the senses, and even thy father’s house, the which is the intellect; and do thou flee from thyself, and leave thyself apart! In the image of such as are possessed, and in the guise of the Corybantes, thou shalt dance and give thyself up to divine transports, in prophetic enthusiasm. For thought once so fired with exaltation is no longer contained in self. Heavenly love makes it to vibrate; it draws it above. It scorneth that which lieth at its feet. It entereth upon that exalted path which shall bear it aloft to the heavenly heritage.’

So much for the philosophy or religion of the Neoplatonists. This doctrine of ascetic contemplation rising to ecstatic transports seems to assort ill with the mentality of Synesius, with his character as displayed in these burning vivid and intimately personal letters before us. I think we may get a step nearer to the basis of his philosophy in the following passage translated from his *Dion*, in which he obviously alludes to those who cultivate the ascent to truth by ecstasy instead of dialectical reason and the slow relentless logic of the Platonist :

‘But their procedure is like a Bacchic ecstasy—like the leap of a man frenzied or possessed: the attaining of a goal without running the race, a passing beyond reason without the previous exercise of reasoning. For the divine condition (contemplation?) is neither judgement of the discursive intellect nor a movement of intuitive mind, nor is it one thing in one context and another in another.¹ On the contrary—to compare small with great—it is like Aristotle’s view that men being initiated have not a lesson to learn, but an experience to undergo and a condition into which they must be brought—viz. while they are becoming fit (for revelation).

¹ Dean Inge in his brilliant work on the philosophy of Plotinus defines the Greek word *θεωρία* as having meant in the Ionic philosophy ‘curiosity’; he illustrates his meaning by saying that ‘a traveller like Hecataeus or Herodotus might be said to visit foreign lands *θεωρίας ἕνεκα*. In the mysteries the word was applied to a dramatic or sacramental spectacle such as the representation of a suffering god. Pythagoras is said to have been the first to give it a new meaning, as the contemplation, not of the sacrament, but of the underlying truths which sacraments symbolise. . . . The quietness (*ἡσυχία*) of Spirit is unimpeded activity; its being is activity; it acts what it contemplates.’ —*Op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 178.

But the state of fitness for revelation (i. e. as well as the process) also is irrational, and if reasoning plays no part in preparing it, much more so.

Therefore their descent to commonplace experience as well (as their ascent) is itself immediate (i. e. not an intelligible process), and very much more so. It is like a fall, just as we liken the ascent to a leap. For Reason did not send them on their way, and consequently did not receive them on their return. How can these two conditions harmonize—a grasp of primary reality succeeded by a plunge into brambles and osier beds (the sixteenth-century folio reads *λύγους*, withies)?

But at any rate man is, and is called, rational in virtue of the intermediate and discursive faculty, which *they* have never exercised—at least to judge from appearances.

The end then, the condition we wish to attain, is the same for both of us, and if we attained it there would be no difference between us. But as regards the intervening process, our philosopher has shown himself the sounder thinker, for he has prepared himself a road and ascends it as if it were a ladder, so that the ascent is in some degree his own achievement, since as he advances he will probably encounter his soul's desire. And even if he does not encounter it, at all events he has advanced on his road; and this is no small matter; even thus he would differ from the rest of mankind as much as they differ from the beasts of the fields. . . .¹

And speaking of the same sort of men later on, he expresses himself as follows:

'Concerning these, I have no hesitation in saying that they labour and consume their time in vain, if they neither possess intellect as a natural gift nor have acquired it; and we should run the risk of harbouring an unholy thought if we were to suppose that God could dwell elsewhere within us than in the intellect; for this is the temple, nay, the house of God.'

The doctrine set forth here could not be more explicit. The true philosopher attains truth slowly and by the processes of reasoning, not by inner illumination or a state of ecstasy.² This is in accordance with

¹ I am indebted to my friend Mr. Mure, Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, for the rendering of this difficult passage. Tennemann, § 204, quoted in Mead's preface to Plotinus (Taylor's translation), remarks that according to Plotinus 'The employment of philosophy is to acquire a knowledge of the Unity, the essence and first principle of all things, and that not mediately by thought and meditation, but by a more exalted method, by direct intuition (*παρρησία*) anticipating the progress of reflection.' This passage from the *Dion*, therefore, may be taken as directed against the followers of Plotinus.

² 'The author of the *Contemplative Life*', says Dean Inge, 'in a remarkable sentence, says that "the bacchanals and corybants continue their raptures *until they see what they*

Plato's allegory of the tedious ascent from the cavern in which man is enchained, and also with the view of dialectic that runs through all the dialogues. Again, the human intellect is the temple of the Deity, and intellect can be acquired, if not already existing in the subject, through reason, and reason alone. Clearly this is the doctrine of Plato, but it is also the negation of the phase of Neoplatonism which makes asceticism, contemplation, and abstraction the elements of the ecstatic state in which truth is ultimately divined. We should look then, when seeking for the foundations of Synesius's philosophy, to his study of Plato, the one author who is most quoted in his works and whose thought must have been more intelligible to a man of his character than the mystical subtleties of the Alexandrians. It is difficult to see in the 'Squire Bishop' of Charles

desire." That ecstasy is a form of madness was fully admitted. Galen defines it as "brief madness", as madness is "chronic ecstasy". But this did not prevent the belief that a man who was temporarily "out of his mind" might be the organ of some higher intelligence, and that in particular the gift of prophecy is thus imparted. Thus ecstasy . . . taught that there is no impassable cleft between the human and the Divine Spirit.—*Op. Cit.*, vol. ii, p. 2.

I can only repeat that I cannot dissociate the philosophy of the Neoplatonists from this conception of an emotional frenzy, to lead up to which was the aim of the philosophic life. Plato himself, as Dean Inge has pointed out (see below), 'describes the philosopher as the spectator of all time and existence'. But I understand Plato to mean something very different from the 'contemplation' of Plotinus. Synesius has well expressed the real Platonic conception in the last chapter of the *Egyptian Tale*, quoting a remark attributed to Pythagoras of Samos that the wise man is a spectator of the universe, placed therein as in a theatre to watch the stage. The passages from Plato I have in mind are the following: "Ἡ οὖν ὑπάρχει διανοία μεγαλοπρέπεια καὶ θεωρία παντὸς μὲν χρόνου, πάσης δὲ οὐσίας, οἷόν τε οἶε τούτῳ μέγα τι δοκεῖν εἶναι τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον; . . . Οὐκοῦν καὶ θάνατον οὐ δεινὸν τι ἡγήσεται ὁ τοιοῦτος; . . . Ἐπιλήσμονα ἄρα ψυχὴν ἐν ταῖς ἱκανῶς φιλοσόφοις μή ποτε ἐγκρίνωμεν. 'How can he who has magnificence of mind and is the spectator (θεωρὸς) of all time and all existence, think much of human life? . . . Or can such an one account death fearful? . . . A soul which forgets cannot be ranked among genuine philosophic natures.'—*Republic*, vi. 2, p. 486 A.

Ἡ δὲ διάνοια, ταῦτα πάντα ἡγησαμένη σμικρὰ καὶ οὐδέν, ἀτιμάσασα πανταχῇ ἔφρεται κατὰ Πίνδαρον, "τά τε γὰρ ὑπέρβη" καὶ τὰ ἐπίπεδα γεωμετροῦσα, "οὐρανοῦ τε ὑπὲρ" ἀστρονομοῦσα, . . . εἰς τῶν ἐγγὺς οὐδὲν αὐτὴν συγκαθεύδουσα. 'His mind, disdaining the littleness and nothingness of human things is "flying all abroad", as Pindar says, measuring earth and heaven, and the things which are under and on the earth and above the heaven, but not condescending to anything which is within reach.'—*Theaetetus*, c. 24, p. 173 E.

Kingsley's romance, or the 'fifth-century Sidney Smith', as Mr. Phillimore calls him, the fellow-thinker of Alexandrian mystics such as Plotinus and Porphyry. There is a ruggedness about Synesius's character that ill fits with the School in question but which is not at all inconsistent with a mind which has been formed directly upon the influence of Plato. That Plato was his favourite author is clearly enough shown by the great number of quotations interspersed throughout his works. One hundred and sixty of these quotations and direct references to Plato have been identified by Hauck, whereas Plotinus, the fountain-head of Neoplatonism, is quoted only fifteen times.¹ Why then, it may be asked, is so much of his philosophic language dressed out in a garb that points to a Neoplatonic origin? Here, again, I think that the answer is to be found in the character of the man as it reveals itself in these Letters. It is obvious that he possessed a nature intellectually malleable and easily influenced by the atmosphere about him, and it is equally clear that the Neoplatonic current was at its full tide when he lived, the current that carried its mystical burden from Philo to Plotinus, and from Plotinus to Proclus; nor is it difficult to conceive that Synesius, the Platonist at heart, should be affected by its phantom of thought, by its imagery, and at the same time that Synesius the rhetorician and writer of odes should unconsciously drift with this current and sometimes echo its mystic notes. But what a different note it is from the deeply convinced voice of Plotinus or any of the other mystics of the period, whether pagan or Christian; what a loose handling of Neoplatonic ideas whenever they crop up in the Hymns or the Essays! This superficiality is so evident that we cannot wonder that Mr. Phillimore, in his introduction to Philostratus' 'Apollonius of Tyana', has been led to dismiss him as 'an epigonus of the Sophist breed'. Nor should this cause surprise even to the most sincere admirers of the writer. His Essays are indeed for the most part the works of a rhetorician. Even at his best, he was not an original thinker. In Synesius it is more to the man than to the writer that our sympathies turn, and the more we study his purely literary efforts the more we are impressed by their rhetorical nature, and the more their content seems divorced from the character of the writer, as we gain knowledge of it from these intensely vivid

¹ *Welche griechischen Autoren der klassischen Zeit kennt und benützt Synesius von Cyrene?*, Albert Hauck, Friedland: Meckel, 1911. See also Crawford, *Synesius the Hellene*, Appendix D.

and heartfelt letters. An example in point is the *Eulogy of Baldness*¹, a rejoinder to Dion Chrysostom's *Praise of Hair* (A.D. 100). It is a curious string of witticisms, at times taking on a more serious and quasi-philosophical form, and reminds us of the passages in the first letter in which he speaks of an important work of his to which he has added much that is in 'the lighter strain'. The example of Plato's playfulness and satire may have affected this admirer of the master's works.

Of Dion Chrysostom's essay we have nothing except what has been quoted by Synesius. An anonymous Greek writer of the time replied to this satire of Synesius by another, in which he, in turn, takes up the arguments of Dion in another eulogy of hair. All this is characteristic of the schools of Athens and Alexandria, in which readiness of wit and repartee were cultivated to an incredible extent. But amidst the epigrammatic banter that runs through the work we come upon passages that it is difficult to take in any other than a serious sense, and in which the author plays as upon a musical instrument for his own diversion and ours. I give the following extract as an example:

'As to that part of the Divine nature which is hidden, how can any one inquire into it, since once for all it is unwilling to be revealed? Now, the whole visible universe is composed of exact spheres, the sun, the moon, all the stars, both those that are fixed and the planets. Whether they are greater or less, they are all of the same spherical shape. Now, what could be balder than a sphere, and what more like to the Divine image? There is a saying, too, that the soul wishes to imitate God. This must surely be that third God, the cosmic soul which its own father, and demiurge of the bodily cosmos, brought into the cosmos, having made it perfect and entire and whole out of every germ of life, and all bodies. And so he

¹ A very curious translation of at least a part of the *Eulogy of Baldnesse* was published in England in the sixteenth century, 'Englished by Abraham Flemming'. I cannot refrain from appending a quotation from it, on account of the quaintness of its style, and also because it conveys an excellent image of this amusing and paradoxical satire, or, as the translator calls it, 'A prettie pamphlet to peruse, and replenished with recreation': 'Dion in all his discourse concludeth not that haire is a good thing to them that have it, nor that it is an evill thing to them that have it not'. 'Our treatise, contrariwise, searcheth out the verie secret properties of thinges and findeth by reason that baldnesse is excellent, that it is heavenlie, that it is the ende of Nature, that it is the thing whereby we attaine heavenlie wisdom, and that it purchaseth to them which have it the possession of innumerable benefits, as well of the bodie as of the minde. Whereas indeed bushie haire in steede of commodities bringeth inconveniences, and namlie, likenesse unto beastes.'

endowed it with that form of forms, to wit, that one which has the most perfect capacity in volume. . . . Wherefore the entire-soul animates the whole cosmos, which is itself spherical, and the souls which pour out of the entire-soul and have become fragments of it, will, each one of them, that which the entire-soul wills, to wit, to inhabit bodies and to be the moving spirits of universes, the very thing which was the cause of their severance. In this wise does Nature stand in need of separated spheres. Above were moulded the stars, and below, the heads, that these might be the mansions of souls, small universes in the universe.

'For it must needs be, I think, that the living cosmos should be made out of the living. To the duller spirits it is a matter of indifference that they must dwell in a hairy head, far removed from the clearly defined pattern, but to each wise spirit is allotted, to one a star to dwell in, to another a bald head. For although nature is weak at producing perfection here below, nevertheless she does not tolerate the part of us which looks upward and towards heaven, to be formed otherwise than as a universe in its construction.

'Baldness, then, has been revealed to us as a heaven, and as many praises as one might sing of that sphere, so many might one sing of baldness' (c. 8).

It would be difficult to say whether the above extracts are intended as a serious exposition of some strange philosophic conception, or are to be understood as ironical. Certainly that is the impression which they would convey to a reader in our day. The following extract is a very good example of the lighter side which he mentions in Letter 1 :

'For my own part, when the terrible thing began (i.e. baldness) and hair first fell off, I was wounded to the very heart, and when it proceeded further, and one hair went after another, then two at a time and finally several, the war raging the while over a head carried hither and thither ; then in very truth I esteemed myself to suffer more harshly than did the Athenians at the hands of Archidamus when their groves at Acharnae were destroyed. . . . Which one of the gods, which of the demons did I fail to accuse at that moment? I was even inclined to write something eulogistic of Epicurus, not that I took the same view as he concerning the gods, but that I might get my teeth into them to the best of my power ; for I said, Where is that providence in which each of us receives his due? What crime have I committed that I should appear more unseemly to the fair sex? not that my neighbours' wives signify, for I am the most righteous of men in what concerns Aphrodite, and I could vie with Bellerophon himself in virtue ; but even one's mother and sisters set some store upon the beauty of their men. . . . So then I railed against fate, and thought my misfortune no small matter. . . .' (c. 1 f.).

Or again, if we take the following :

'If, therefore, he who is shaved by the hand of man is pious, that man who is bald by nature has a nearer natural affinity with God, and perchance the Divine nature also is even thus. . . . May my speech be acceptable in His sight, for it shall be said with all reverence' (c. 7).

That this is the work of the rhetorician, of the wit changing at times into the poet or the philosopher, is sufficiently obvious, but in the *Letters* the veil is cast aside, and conscience and conviction are equally clear; his doubts as to the dogmas of the Church, his frank avowal of his love for the pleasures of the chase and the life of the country squire, and his ignorance of the doctrines which for the sake of his suffering countrymen he had espoused.

'The city ought to understand', he says in Letter 13, 'the imprudence it committed in appointing one for the priesthood (i.e. Synesius) who had not sufficient confidence in his mission. . . . Forgiveness for me there must be, and blame to yourselves, for instead of choosing one deep in knowledge of the Scriptures, you selected one who is ignorant of them¹.'

By the line of thought implied in this passage we must explain what seems contradictory in Synesius's religious philosophy.

A tendency to consolidate religion with philosophy has been looked upon as an indication of the decline of Greek thought. If such is the case, the decline must have been an early one. It is only in the earlier pre-Socratic philosophers that we find the note of pure speculation. The greatest work of Plato himself, if such we esteem *The Republic* to be, is largely a treatise on ethics in their relation to practical life both for the State and for the individual man. Even the philosopher must come down from his heights to take part in the daily life of his fellows, and is admonished that he must not live in the 'Isles of the Blest'. The object of philosophy is to make statesmen and citizens of the State rather than abstract thinkers. In Synesius, as Miss Gardner observes, there are traces of his Spartan blood and of the doctrines of the Stoics who, in their turn, leaned upon the Socratic principle that conduct and discipline are the

¹ 'Sa vie et son œuvre offrent le plus grand intérêt pour qui veut étudier les rapports de Néoplatonisme et du Christianisme, souvent ennemis, parfois alliés, mais défendant toujours des doctrines théologiques si voisines que Saint Augustin sera ramené par les Néoplatoniciens du Manichéisme au Catholicisme, et que l'ami de Hypatie, massacrée par les moines chrétiens, sera pour Bossuet "le grand Synésius".'—Berthelot, in the *Grande Encyclopédie*.

last words in religious philosophy. The same doctrine is even more accentuated in the case of Epicurus and his followers.

'Epicurus', says Alfred Croiset, 'found out in his own experience the way of happiness, taught it to others as a sort of practical religion of which he was himself the prophet and the high priest. His disciples, for their part, accepted his dogmas without discussing them. The Neoplatonist Numenius, in the second century of the Christian era, observed that Epicureanism had no heresies, and that every alteration of its doctrine was condemned by the Epicureans as wrong-doing or rather as impiety'.

So at last we find in Synesius the man who has been trained to observe a religion under the cloak of philosophy, and this religion is not the one that after many protestations he elects to serve.¹ The taking over of the

¹ Did Christianity enter into the Neoplatonic doctrine, or assist in the crystallizing of its forms? Zeller thinks not. 'We regard,' he says, 'as untenable the view that the Christian religion, as a religion, participated in the formation of Neoplatonism, leaving out of account the speculations of the Gnostics. Not only is it undeniable that Christianity entered into relations with Neoplatonism at a later date, and then merely by virtue of its own conclusions, but the two are intimately related in their origins. Both came out of an age when the various peoples who lived under the rule of the Roman Empire had lost or had begun to lose their independence, their native religions, their forms of national organization, their individual character; when the foundations of the outward and inner life were crumbling simultaneously. A consciousness of their fall was dawning amongst civilized peoples, and a presentiment of a coming era or a seeking after a form of spiritual life that should be new and satisfying . . . was becoming general. Proceeding from this common origin, of an acute sense of misfortune, the two forces in question (i.e. Christianity and Neoplatonism) came into being. Both are penetrated by a sense of the insufficiency of this earthly existence, of the frailty and insignificance of everything material, and of the infinite distance which lies between the world and God, between Nature and Spirit. A solution to this opposition was sought for by both sides, and both sides were unable to find it, after mature examination, in any other direction than an abandonment to the Divine protection, in the belief in a Divine revelation. Now Christianity recognizes such a revelation in certain persons and historical events; for Neoplatonism this partly coincides with the natural order of things, and is partly the inaccessible goal of mystical speculation. The one of these taught the stooping of the Divinity to the lowest abyss of human weakness, the other pursued man's elevation to a super-human deification. One brought forward a new religion . . . but forasmuch as it was linked to anything already existent, it was a near neighbour to the Jewish dogma: the other sought to remedy the misfortunes of the age by a system of philosophic speculation, that should reunite in itself the fruits of Greek science and speculation, but which precisely for this reason was not a force capable of infusing new life into the dying civilization of Greece.'—E. Zeller, *History of Greek Philosophy*, 112², 494.

priesthood and the bishopric he alludes to in Letter 67 as an act of rash presumption, inasmuch as, 'brought up outside the pale of the Church and led in the way of teachings far different from hers', he attempted 'to grasp the altars of God'. A soul's tragedy seems enclosed in these words. The bridge between the Neoplatonism which Synesius affected, and as I think only affected, and the Christianity which he imagined he understood and could accept with sundry reservations,¹ seems to have been a fragile one. For through all there shines the light of a sensitive conscience, and the repeated allusions to an incapacity for the post which he has accepted are very significant. In Letter 137 he says to his friend, Herculan, 'life according to the intellect is the end of man'. This letter, according to Druon, belongs to the year 395, and to the earlier part of his life. In another passage, in Letter 105, written to his brother, and, according to the same authority, as late as 409, and before he ascended the episcopal chair, we find the same conviction. 'It is difficult, if not impossible, to shake convictions which have entered the soul through the intellect to the point of demonstration'. The conception of philosophy implied in passages such as these, seems to be sound Platonism, and quite in accord with the passage quoted above from the *Dion*, in which he speaks of the *intellect* as the 'temple of God', and seems to be attacking the contemplative emotional disciples of Plotinus and the rest. The last spark of the old Greek philosophy seems to kindle and expire with Synesius. 'Plato's ship, the "Reason"', to quote a modern writer on philosophy and economics,² 'had long since been pounded to pieces on the rocks of the Atomists, until Pyrrho in the third century B. C. gave out the despairing cry, "Man can see neither with his eyes nor with his reason. Man is blind."'³ This is the last word of Greek philosophy,

¹ Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff in *Hymnen des Proklos und Synesios*, p. 285, says, 'It is easy to see how unjustified by evidence would be an attempt to trace the origin of (Christian) Theology back to its own sources or to the Bible, as if the Christians of those days could have taken no notice whatever of the philosophy commonly taught, although they might have so pretended.'

² I have taken with grateful acknowledgments this allegory of the decline and fall of Greek philosophy from *Taxation and the Distribution of Wealth*, by Frederic Mathews (New York, 1914), p. 502. This very interesting work on the history of ethics in their relation to economic and social organization, includes some very brilliant chapters on the history of Greek philosophy.

³ 'He himself (Pyrrho) has left nothing in writing, but his disciple Timon says that

which lost its vitality after Zeno and the Stoics. But centuries afterwards, undeterred by previous failures, Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus decided to fit out a new ship. They named it the "Ecstasy". They knew that if they called it the "Reason", the philosopher would not embark, but with this name they succeeded in finding a crew. Plotinus laid the course. They were so pleased with their voyage that they went even farther than they had intended, and their enemies suggest that they ultimately re-named their vessel the "Frenzy". Be this as it may, she finally disappeared in the great fog-banks of Proclus and was lost to view, but not for ever; for, like the fabled Flying Dutchman, she appeared again at long intervals, once in the fifteenth century on the Arno, with Pico della Mirandola at the helm, and once in our own town of Cambridge, two centuries later, with More and Cudworth; and at the present day there are signs that other hands are attempting to bring her into port. Is it too much to say that Neoplatonism was a sort of pendant to a once living Greek philosophy, which had ceased to exist? The philosophy of Greece, so intensely vital while it lasted, died as everything dies here below. The soil had become exhausted, it had been worked and cross-worked to its uttermost. Proclus read its funeral oration in the fifth century, and for the next aeon one hears nothing but the bleat of the scholiast, the lost sheep of human thought. Now at this period Synesius seems to me to have been unique. While the Neoplatonists imagined themselves to be interpreting Plato, whereas they only misread and befogged everything they took out of the great thinker's work, Synesius alone of men in his day seems to have sometimes turned his eye upon the sun itself rather than upon its reflections in the stagnant pools. But the men of his time were only following a law which is a normal one in the whole history of philosophy. When Coleridge said of the Cambridge Platonists 'they are Plotinists rather than Platonists', he was only recording an inevitable tendency in latter-day students of Plato, to see the great light of philosophy through the glasses of other philosophers, whether of Aristotle or of Hegel or of Plotinus and the Mystics, later systems which, in Ruskin's words, stand to Plato very much as the earth and the moon

... he declared that things were in an equal degree indifferent and unstable. . . . *For this reason neither our senses nor our opinions are true or false.* So we must not put our trust in them, but be free from beliefs . . . saying of each thing in turn that it no more is than it is not.—Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* xiv. 18; cf. Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. xi, p. 229.

stand to the sun.' Synesius was certainly not an Aristotelian, nor, I should think, very deeply read in Aristotle. His knowledge of the mystical philosophy of Plotinus seems to have been very superficial, and it had induced no deep convictions in his mind.

It must not be forgotten that he came to the school of Alexandria when he had already reached a certain maturity, and it is probable that his mind had been already formed, during the most formative period of a man's life, by his reading in Cyrene, his native town, a place where culture would have been less likely to move with the times, and where traditions in philosophy are more likely to have pointed back to Plato and the Stoics. This would clearly account for a certain sturdy note which runs through his literary productions, and which is so little 'Alexandrian'.¹ The wine

¹ J. A. Symonds, in speaking of Byron's place in literature, remarks that 'he had too much of the raw material of poetry to suit our "later Alexandrian taste".' It is in that sense that I use the word, and it is in that sense that the fundamenta of Synesius' character seem to me divided from those of the Alexandrian philosophers and mystics. As to the direct influence of Plato, von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff in his profoundly considered essay on Proclus and Synesius (p. 285) says that 'the real Plato was, after all, a closed door to him'. I do not quite agree with him in this, owing to the knowledge of Plato's dialogues shown by Synesius in a vast number of quotations and allusions in his works, and to the clear note of Platonic thought which rings through Letter 44. That the real Plato, however, was inaccessible to the Neoplatonists in general, and indeed had been so to the world at large since the days of Speusippus and Aristotle, as he asserts in the same passage, is I believe no more than the truth. Further on he continues, 'Synesius did not care to half-revive the gods of Olympus by means of a symbolism which might have satisfied Proclus. To him they were at the most "metonymies"'; as personal gods they had already ceased to exist for centuries except for the Greek and Christian populace; for the latter believed in them in the shape of demons, as Proclus himself, who regarded them as subject to the *πάθος*. However, the Christians recognized the philosophers' own gods. The Father, that is to say the God of Plato, was in their imagination more than this. He was a personality capable of loving and being loved. He did not reside in some inaccessible transcendent region. The God of the Stoics, the second person of their Triad, became a complete divine personality in the image of Christ. How could the doctrine be other than true, which agreed with philosophy and at the same time satisfied the craving of the soul for a personal and saving God? The innumerable intermediate beings, including the Gods of the stars and the heroes (who could easily develop into Saints and Martyrs), were quite as much in agreement with the Christian as they were with the philosophical monotheism.' This passage, which I have attempted to translate from von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's brilliant study of Synesius' and Proclus' hymns, seems to me to make clearer than anything so far written on the subject, the nature of the preparation for a formal acceptance of Christian doctrine which must have been

of Synesius was too strong for the bottles of the Alexandrians, if I may be forgiven for inverting the simile. I fancy him as one who had picked up the Neoplatonic phraseology in the great University city, where it was in

operating, perhaps unconsciously, for a long time in the mind of Synesius. If it is true, as Zeller seems to think, in the passage quoted on an earlier page (and I think his view a sound one), that Neoplatonism was the converse of Christianity, may it not also be true that in the words of Wilamowitz, 'Men of the same period and of the same standards of education have more in common with each other in their religious needs, despite the fact that they have named their gods differently, than they have with those who in other periods call their gods by the same names. This applies to Proclus and Synesius. We notice a difference in their position and mentality by the different things for which they pray. . . . When Synesius writes the eighth hymn, thanks to Christianity he is personally much more familiar with God, so that he is able to approach Him with prayers for those he loves; but even in this place his prayer is in the vein of thought of a Porphyry: "They who cling to virtue being in a prison, and they who are confined by the body as in a dungeon, owe it to themselves to ask the gods for a release from them. And it befits us, as children torn from their fathers, to pray for a way above to our true fathers . . . being a fragment of the All, it befits us to make our demand of the All; for in every way the turning to the Whole brings salvation to every one."'

All this was expressed by Thomas Taylor in the eighteenth century, in terms as perfect in their Neoplatonic form as any that could be found in the fourth century:

To Apollo

Parent of concord, universal lord.

Here, from thy bosom torn, I sorrowing stay,
And meditate my flight from day to day;
Indignant in the realms of night I roam,
And oft look up and gain a glimpse of home.
As some poor exile on a distant shore,
With mournful eyes surveys the country o'er,
And oft looks back, and oft recalls to mind
The pleasing coast and friends he left behind,
Unwilling views the cheerful light of day,
And in ideal prospects pines away;
So grieves my soul while absent and distressed,
She roams an exile from her place of rest.
Oh! haste the period, when from body free,
This wretched captive shall return to thee;
Shall once more recognize her kindred soil,
And prove the blessing of her former toil;
Plac'd where no change impairs, no griefs corrode,
And shining 'midst th' immortal gods a god.

Five books of Plotinus: viz. On Felicity, On the Nature and Origin of Evil, etc., by Thomas Taylor, London, 1794, pp. 286 ff.

the very air he breathed ; but it was too late for it to take a deep hold upon a mind which was not akin to it, or to any form of mysticism, by natural bent. Even at Alexandria who was his chief influence ? Hypatia, of whom we know chiefly that she was a mathematician, the daughter of a mathematician, and the author of works on mathematics, and probably an authority on formal logic. I imagine that her influence on him was not of a sort that would lead a pupil to mysticism, but was rather one that led him to take up the path of studies in science and astronomy, as we should gather from the letter to Paeonius, in which he alludes to her in this sense, and Letter 15 to Hypatia herself, in which he asks her to construct for him an instrument for his pursuits in chemistry or physics. Once, however, that Theophilus had induced him, for his own political motives, to embrace Christianity and to take over the highest position in the Church, he came into close and intimate contact for the first time with the religion to which he had been, in form at least, newly converted. After this, evidences are not wanting in his letters that Christianity was becoming a substance to him instead of a shadow.

‘The whole of the Jewish inheritance, including St. Paul, did not exist for him’, says Wilamowitz, ‘and the teaching of the life of Christ and of His death had no real significance for him ; he only experienced the actual presence of the Christ who had been active as a demiurge in the creation of the world, and who was the life of the soul of the world, and of the soul of man.’

It was in this way, he thinks, that Synesius had ‘become a Christian through his philosophy long before he joined the Church’, though a Christian of to-day would scarcely recognize him as a brother in the faith. Some consciousness of such a position even in regard to the Christians of his own time may be implied in his repeated allusions to his own presumption in daring to touch the Altars of God, but if such be the case, it was, in the words of Carlyle, ‘with sore travail of spirit’ that the revelation was made, and finally the uneasy soul is lost to us in the mists of an unrecorded death.

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CORRESPONDENTS TO WHOM LETTERS ARE ADDRESSED

- | | |
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| Anas tasius, 22, 43, 46, 79. | Herodes and Martyrius, 19. |
| Anysius, 6, 14, 37, 59, 77, 78, 94. | Hesychius, 93. |
| Asclepiodotus, 126. | Hypatia, 10, 15, 16, 33, 81, 124, |
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| The Elders, 11. | Theodorus, 7, 115. |
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| 10, 113, 114, 120, 122, 125, 127, 132, | Theotimus, 47, 49. |
| 135, 136. | Troilus, 26, 73, 91, 111, 112, 118, 119, |
| A General, 62, 130. | 123. |
| The Governor, 21, 62. | (To Unknown Correspondents), 41, |
| Heliodorus, 17, 25, 117. | 57, 159. |
| Herculian, 137-46. | Uranius, 40. |

THE HISTORICAL SEQUENCE OF THE LETTERS ACCORDING TO DRUON

Historical Order.	Manuscript Order (Hercher).	Approximate Date.	Historical Order.	Manuscript Order (Hercher).	Approximate Date.
1	51	394	38	3	402
2	33	"	39	35	"
3	115	"	40	39	"
4	137	395	41	32	"
5	138	"	42	52	"
6	139	"	43	65	"
7	145	"	44	92	"
8	7	"	45	106	"
9	41	"	46	114	"
10	55	396	47	109	"
11	56	"	48	146	"
12	54	"	49	143	"
13	136	"	50	144	"
14	135	"	51	36	"
15	110	"	52	15	"
16	4	397	53	17	"
17	34	398	54	25	403
18	112	399	55	117	"
19	31	400	56	40	"
20	120	401	57	98	"
21	61	"	58	99	"
22	104	"	59	97	"
23	113	"	60	129	"
24	124	"	61	29	"
25	38	"	62	30	"
26	88	"	63	154	404
27	152	402	64	127	"
28	1	"	65	44	"
29	74	"	66	50	"
30	100	"	67	18	"
31	140	"	68	19	"
32	141	"	69	20	"
33	142	"	70	21	"
34	101	"	71	123	"
35	103	"	72	125	405
36	102	"	73	133	"
37	43	"	74	132	"

Historical Order.	Manuscript Order (Hercher).	Approximate Date.	Historical Order.	Manuscript Order (Hercher)	Approximate Date.
75	130	405	117	8	411
76	75	"	118	159	"
77	118	406	119	42	"
78	119	"	120	47	"
79	131	"	121	91	"
80	134	"	122	66	"
81	22	"	123	67	"
82	71	"	124	79	"
83	150	407	125	37	"
84	151	"	126	94	"
85	108	"	127	77	"
86	107	"	128	78	"
87	122	"	129	72	"
88	95	"	130	93	"
89	63	"	131	26	"
90	64	"	132	90	"
91	2	"	133	87	"
92	49	"	134	68	"
93	148	408	135	76	"
94	149	"	136	13	412
95	24	"	137	6	"
96	23	"	138	14	"
97	48	"	139	157	"
98	53	409	140	158	"
99	111	"	141	5	"
100	82	"	142	45	"
101	83	"	143	28	"
102	84	"	144	147	"
103	85	"	145	128	"
104	86	"	146	89	"
105	155	"	147	69	"
106	156	"	148	59	"
107	27	"	149	46	"
108	153	"	150	80	"
109	73	"	151	12	413
110	105	"	152	126	"
111	96	410	153	70	"
112	11	"	154	81	"
113	116	"	155	62	"
114	60	"	156	10	"
115	121	"	157	16	"
116	9	411			

LETTERS OF SYNESIUS

I

*To Nicander*¹

28

I have begotten children in my books,² some from most august Philosophy, and from Poesy who dwelleth with her in the Temple, some again from Rhetoric of the public place. But any one can see that they are all from the same father, who inclines now to the serious and now to the lighter side. This book³ therefore shall give its own pledge as to which category it belongs. So far as I am concerned, it is so exceptionally dear to me that I would most gladly graft it on to Philosophy, and would rank it amongst my legitimate offspring, but this the very laws of the City refuse me, 'for they are terribly stern guardians of noble birth'. Notwithstanding this, it has whatever bounty I am able to bestow upon it in secret, and I have put much of the sterner side into it also. If, therefore, you agree with me as to its merit, make my work known to your Greek friends, and if its reception be unfavourable let it be returned to the sender. After all, love of offspring is so great a force in nature, that, according to the fable, the very apes when they bring forth their young gaze upon them as idols, and are lost in admiration of their beauty, but those of their fellows they see just as they are,—the offspring of apes. Hence we should leave to others the task of appraising the value of our own creations, for

Note.—The numbers on the right are those of Druon's chronological rearrangement of the Letters.

¹ This Nicander enjoyed the favour of Anthemius. 'Beyond the fact that Synesius respected his literary taste, and asked him to use his influence on behalf of Stratonice's husband, nothing is known of him.' Crawford, p. 408. See Letter 75.

² Cf. Aelian, *Preface to Natural History*.

³ The work alluded to in this letter is understood to be *The Eulogy of Baldness*, in which Synesius seeks to show that baldness is a sign of intellect and wisdom. We learn from this work that Synesius became bald when fairly young.

partiality is quite capable of warping our judgement. It was for this that Lysippus brought Apelles to see his pictures, and for the same reason Apelles brought Lysippus to see his own.

2

*To Joannes*¹

91

To be free from fear one must fear the laws, but you have always been ashamed even to seem to fear them. At all events fear your enemies, and with them fear the judges if they are incorruptible. Nay, they are still to be feared even if they are open to bribery; for such ones, if your purse is not of the longest, are full of zeal to defend the laws once they have found a paymaster into the bargain.

3

*To his Brother*²

38

Aeschines had already been interred three days when his niece came to visit his tomb for the first time. Custom, you know, does not permit girls to attend funerals once they are engaged to be married. However, even then she was dressed in purple, with a diaphanous veil over her hair, and she had decked herself with gold and precious stones that she might not be a sign of evil omen to her betrothed. Seated upon a chair with double cushions and silver feet, so they say, she railed against the untimeliness of this misfortune, on the ground that Aeschines should have died

¹ There are, apparently, three Joannes (Johns) mentioned in the letters. One of these, to whom Letter 44 is addressed, was under the charge of murdering his relative Aemilius. Another is the disorderly soldier, the incompetent general against whom sarcasm is freely directed in Letter 104. A third Joannes was a friend of Synesius to whom he addresses Letter 147, in which he congratulates him on joining one of the monastic orders.

² A greater number of the letters of Synesius are addressed to his brother Euoptius than to any other correspondent. These are the letters: 3, 4, 8, 18, 32, 35, 36, 39, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 65, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 92, 95, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 113, 114, 120, 122, 125, 127, 132, 135, 136.

It will be seen that there are 40 in all out of the 159 of the series. Euoptius was older than Synesius. Beyond what may be gathered from these letters little is known about him. He is chiefly of interest owing to the great confidence and affection shown him by his younger brother.

either before her wedding or after it, and she was angry with us because we were in grief. Scarcely waiting for the seventh day, on which we had met for the funeral banquet, she mounted her mule cart, in company with that talkative old nurse of hers, and, when the forum was thronged, set out on her stately course for Teucheira with all her adornments.

Next week she is preparing to display herself crowned with fillets, and with a towering head-dress like Cybele.

We are in no way wronged by this except in the fact, patent to the whole world, that we have relations with very bad taste. The one who has been wronged is Harmonius the father of her janitor,¹ as Sappho might say, a man who although wise and moderate in all respects in his own life, vied with Cecrops himself on the ground of noble birth. The granddaughter of this man, himself greater than Cecrops, her uncle and janitor Herodes has now given away to the Sosiae and Tibii. Perchance they are right who extol the bridegroom elect to us because of his mother, pointing to his descent from the famous Lais. Now Lais was an Hyccarican slave bought from Sicily, according to one historian; whence this mother of fair offspring, who bore the famous man. She of old lived an irregular life with a shipmaster for her owner—afterwards with an orator, who also owned her, and after these in the third instance with a fellow-slave, at first secretly in the town, then conspicuously, and was a mistress of her art. When by reason of oncoming wrinkles she gave up the practice of her art, she trained in her calling young persons whom she palmed off on strangers. Her son, the orator, asserts that he is dispensed by the law from the duty of supporting a mother who is beyond the pale. Out upon such a law! The mother has been clearly revealed to those thus born: it is only the other parent that is doubtful. All the care that is due to both parents from those born in wedlock should be bestowed by the fatherless on the mother alone.

¹ The word *θυραῖος* employed here means a porter, in allusion to some nuptial rite of the past, according to which a sentinel was stationed at the bride's bedchamber door on the night of the wedding.

Although we started from Bendideum at early dawn, we had scarcely passed Pharius Myrmex by noonday, for our ship went aground two or three times in the bed of the harbour. This mishap at the very outset seemed a bad omen, and it might have been wiser to desert a vessel which had been unlucky from the very start. But we were ashamed to lay ourselves open to an imputation of cowardice from you, and accordingly

‘It was no longer granted us to tremble or to withdraw’.¹

So now, if misfortune awaits us, we shall perish through your fault. After all, was it so dreadful that you should be laughing and we out of danger? But of Epimetheus they aver that

‘His prudence was at fault, his repentance never’, and that is precisely our own case, for we might easily have saved ourselves in

4. This letter was written from Azarius to Euoptius at Alexandria. The following note as to the date of this letter I have translated from Grützmacher’s work, p. 75, n. 3: ‘The date of the composition of this letter is fixed by Seeck in 404. It is impossible that, as Petau supposed, it could have been written after Synesius had been elected bishop, on the journey from Alexandria to Cyrene; a conjecture which Clausen, p. 31, Druon, p. 274, Volkmann, p. 78, Kraus, p. 392, have already refuted. But the chronological statements of the letter constitute a great difficulty; see Tillemont, *Histoire ecclésiastique*, xii. 687; Druon, p. 276; Kraus, p. 392. In the first place it seems to me certain that Friday was the day that the voyage began. For on the evening of the day on which they started, the travellers ran into deadly peril; now this evening is described as the beginning of the Jewish sabbath, therefore Friday evening. The next morning, early on Saturday, they landed on a desolate stretch of country and remained there two days. At the dawn of the fourth day, which was Monday, they made a move, and journeyed that day and the following one, at sea. As the second day was ending a storm arose; this day, writes Synesius, was the thirteenth of the outgoing month. The night of this day, therefore the night of Tuesday to Wednesday, was a νύξ συνοδική, i. e. a night in which it was new moon. By the thirteenth of the outgoing month must be understood the eighteenth of an Egyptian month; Synesius counts by Egyptian months. So we arrive at a Tuesday which was new moon, and also the eighteenth of an Egyptian month. With the help of the professor of astronomy, Wolf, I have succeeded in ascertaining that on the eighteenth Pachon = twenty-eighth January 404, it was Tuesday and new moon, so that we thereby obtain a certain date for the chronology of Synesius.’

¹ *Iliad*, vii. 217

the first instance; whereas now we are lamenting in concert on desert shores, gazing out towards Alexandria to our heart's content, and towards our motherland Cyrene; one of these places we wilfully deserted, while the other we are unable to reach,—all the time having seen and suffered such things as we never thought to happen even in our dreams. Hear my story then, that you may have no further leisure for your mocking wit, and I will tell you first of all how our crew was made up. Our skipper was fain of death owing to his bankrupt condition; then besides him we had twelve sailors, thirteen in all! More than half of them, including the skipper, were Jews—a graceless race and fully convinced of the piety of sending to Hades as many Greeks as possible. The remainder were a collection of peasants who even as late as last year had never gripped an oar, but the one batch and the other were alike in this, that every man of them had some personal defect. Accordingly, so long as we were in safety they passed their time in jesting one with another, accosting their comrades not by their real names, but by the distinguishing marks of their misfortunes, as to call out 'the Lame', the 'Ruptured', the 'Lefthanded', the 'Goggle-eyed'. Each one had his distinguishing mark, and to us this sort of thing was no small source of amusement. The moment we were in danger, however, it was no laughing matter, but rather did we bewail these very defects. We had embarked to the number of more than fifty, about a third of us being women, most of them young and comely. Do not, however, be too quick to envy us, for a screen separated us from them and a stout one at that, the suspended fragment of a recently torn sail, to virtuous men the very wall of Semiramis. Nay, Priapus himself might well have been temperate had he taken passage with Amarantus, for there was never a moment when this fellow allowed us to be free from fear of the uttermost danger. As soon as he had doubled the temple of Poseidon,¹ near you, he

² 'Strabo, Book XVII, speaks of this small cape, which projected in the form of an elbow in the direction of the port, and which was called Posidion on account of the temple of Poseidon which commanded it.'—Druon, p. 439.

made straight for Taphosiris,¹ with all sails spread, to all seeming bent upon confronting Scylla, over whom we were all wont to shudder in our boyhood when doing our school exercises. This manœuvre we detected only just as the vessel was nearing the reefs, and we all raised so mighty a cry that perforce he gave up his attempt to battle with the rocks. All at once he veered about as though some new idea had possessed him, and turned his vessel's head to the open, struggling as best he might against a contrary sea.

Presently a fresh south wind springs up and carries us along, and soon we are out of sight of land and have come into the track of the double-sailed cargo vessels, whose business does not lie with our Libya; they are sailing in quite another course. Again we make common cause of complaint, and our grievance now is that we have been forced away too far from the shore. Then does this Titan of ours, Amarantus, fulminate, standing up on the stern and hurling awful imprecations upon us. 'We shall obviously never be able to fly,' he said; 'how can I help people like you who distrust both the land and the sea?' 'Nay,' I said, 'Not so, worthy Aramantus, in case any one uses them rightly. For our own part we had no yearning for Taphosiris, for we wanted only to live. Moreover,' I continued, 'what do we want of the open sea? Let us rather make for Pentapolis, hugging the shore; for then, if indeed we have to face one of those uncertainties which, as you admit, are unfortunately only too frequent on the deep, we shall at least be able to take refuge in some neighbouring harbour.' I did not succeed in persuading him by my talk, for to all of it the outcast only turned a deaf ear; and what is more, a gale commenced to blow from the north, and the violent wind soon raised seas mountains high. This gust falling suddenly on us, drove our sail back, and made it concave in place of its convex form, and the ship was all but capsized by the stern. With great difficulty, however, we headed her in.

Then Amarantus thunders out, 'See what it is to be master of the art of navigation. I had long foreseen this storm, and

¹ Taphosiris, according to Plutarch, was the site of the tombs of Isis and Osiris.

that is why I sought the open. I can tack in now, since our sea room allows us to add to the length of our tack. But such a course as the one I have taken would not have been possible had we hugged the shore, for in that case the ship would have been dashed on the coast.' Well, we were perforce satisfied with his explanation so long as daylight lasted and dangers were not imminent, but these failed not to return with the approach of night, for as the hours passed the seas increased continually in volume. Now it so happened that this was the day on which the Jews make what they term the 'Preparation', and they reckon the night, together with the day following this, as a time during which it is not lawful to work with one's hands. They keep this day holy and apart from the others, and they pass it in rest from labour of all kinds. Our skipper accordingly let go the rudder from his hands the moment he guessed that the sun's rays had left the earth, and throwing himself prostrate,

'Allowed to trample on him what sailor so desired.'¹

We who at first could not understand why he was thus lying down, imagined that despair was the cause of it all. We rushed to his assistance and implored him not to give up the last hope yet. Indeed the hugest waves were actually menacing the vessel, and the very deep was at war with itself. Now it frequently happens that when the wind has suddenly relaxed its violence, the billows already set in motion do not immediately subside; they are still under the influence of the wind's force, to which they yield and with which they battle at the same time, and the oncoming waves fight against those subsiding. I have every need of my store of flaming language, so that in recounting such immense dangers I may not fall into the trivial. To people who are at sea in such a crisis, life may be said to hang by a thread only, for if our skipper proved at such a moment to be an orthodox observer of the Mosaic law, what was life worth in the future? Indeed we soon understood why he had abandoned the helm, for when we begged him to do his best to

¹ Sophocles, *Ajax*, 1146.

save the ship, he stolidly continued reading his roll.¹ Despairing of persuasion, we finally attempted force, and one staunch soldier—for many Arabs of the cavalry were of our company—one staunch soldier, I say, drew his sword and threatened to behead the fellow on the spot if he did not resume control of the vessel. But the Maccabean in very deed was determined to persist in his observances. However, in the middle of the night he voluntarily returned to the helm. 'For now,' he said, 'we are clearly in danger of death, and the law commands.' On this the tumult sprang up afresh, groaning of men and shrieking of women. All called upon the gods, and cried aloud; all called to mind those they loved. Aramantus alone was in good spirits, for he thought to himself that now at last he would foil his creditors. For myself, amidst those horrors, I swear to you by the god sacred to philosophy, that the only thing that troubled me was a passage from Homer. I feared that were my body once swallowed up in the waves, the soul itself also might eternally perish, for somewhere in his epic he writes:

'Ajax perished, once he had drunk of the briny wave,'²

bearing witness to the fact that death at sea is the most grievous way of perishing, for in no other case does the poet speak of annihilation, but of every one who dies the phrase is 'he went to Hades'. Thus in the two books of the *Nekuiai*³ the lesser Ajax is not brought into the narrative, for this very reason, that his soul is not in Hades; and again, Achilles, the most high-spirited and the most daring of all, shrinks from death by drowning and refers to it as a pitiable ending.⁴ As I was musing in this fashion, I noticed that

¹ Romanas autem soliti contemnere leges,
Iudaicum ediscunt et servant ac metuunt ius
Tradidit arcano quodcumque volumine Moses.

Juvenal, xiv. 100-2.

² *Odyssey*, iv. 511:

ὡς ὁ μὲν ἐνθ' ἀπόλωλεν, ἐπεὶ πίνετο ἀλμυρὸν ὕδωρ.

³ *Ibid.*, xi. and xxiv.

⁴ *Iliad*, xxi. 281:

Νῦν δέ με λευγαλέῳ θανάτῳ εἴμαρτο ἀλῶναι,
ἐρχθέντ' ἐν μεγάλῳ ποταμῷ, ὡς παῖδα συφορβόν,
ὅν ῥά τ' ἑναυλος ἀποέρση χειμῶνι περῶντα.

all the soldiers on board were standing with drawn swords. On inquiring the reason for this, I learned from them that they regarded it as more honourable to belch out their souls to the winds while still on the deck, than to gape them out to the waves. These men are by nature true descendants of Homer, thought I, and I entirely approved their view of the matter. Then some one loudly proclaimed that every one possessing gold should suspend it about the neck, and those who possessed it did so, as well as those who had anything of the value of gold. The women themselves put on their jewellery, and distributed cords to those who needed them: such is the time-honoured custom. Now this is the reason for it. It is a matter of necessity that the corpse from a shipwreck should carry with it the fee for burial, inasmuch as whosoever comes across the dead body and profits by it, will fear the laws of Adrastia [Nemesis]¹, and will scarcely grudge sprinkling a little sand on the one who has given to him so much more in value. So then they occupied themselves, but I sat solemnly apart, my thoughts fixed on the heavy sum of money which my host had deposited with me. I was lamenting, not so much my approaching death, the god of hospitality be my witness! as the sum of money which would be lost to this Thracian before whom, even when dying, I should feel shame. I came to the point of regarding it as a luxury to die in the fullest sense of the word, above all to perish in such a way as to escape all consciousness hereafter. Now what made death gape at our feet was the fact that the ship was running with all sails spread, and that there was no means of taking them in, for as often as we attempted this we were thwarted by the ropes, which stuck in the

‘But now by a sorry death am I doomed to die, pent in this mighty river, like a swineherd boy whom a torrent sweepeth down, as he essayeth to cross it in a storm.’—Lang, Leaf, and Myers’ translation.

¹ The laws of Adrastia were those that punished ingratitude. They may be identified with Nemesis: cf. Alciphron, *Epistolae*, I. x. (4): περινοστήσομεν ἄχρι καὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Καφηρέως τῶν ἀκτῶν, ἵν’ εἴ ποῦ τι ἐκ τῶν ναυαγίας ἀποπτυσθὲν εὐρεθείη σῶμα, τοῦτο περιστεύλαντες καλῶμεν ταφῇ. ‘We will stroll as far as the beach under Caphereus, and give honourable burial to any corpse we find there cast up from a shipwreck.’—F. A. Wright.

pulleys; and again we had a secret fear lest in the night time, even if we lived out the sea, we should approach land in this sorry plight.

But day broke before all this had time to occur, and never, I know, did we behold the sun with greater joy. The wind grew more moderate as the temperature became milder, and thus, as the moisture evaporated, we were able to work the rigging and handle the sails. We were unable, it is true, to replace our sail by a new one, for this was already in the hands of the pawnbroker, but we took it in like the swelling folds of a garment, and lo, in four hours' time we who had imagined ourselves already in the jaws of death, were disembarking in a remote desert place, possessing neither town nor farm near it, only an expanse of open country of one hundred and thirty stadia. Our ship was riding in the open sea, for the spot was not a harbour, and it was riding on a single anchor. The second anchor had been sold, and a third *Amarantus* did not possess. When now we touched the dearly beloved land, we embraced the earth as a real living mother. We sent up hymns of gratitude to Providence, as is our custom, and to all this we added a mention of the present good fortune by which we had been saved contrary to all expectation. Thus we waited two days until the sea should have abated its fury. When, however, we were unable to discover any way out by land, for we could find no one in the country, we decided to try our fortune again at sea. We straightway started at dawn with a wind which blew from the stern all that day and the following one, but towards the end of this second day the wind left us and we were in despair. However, only too soon should we be longing for a calm. It was the thirteenth day of the waning moon, and a great danger was now impending, I mean the conjunction of certain constellations and those well known chance events which no one, they say, ever confronted at sea with impunity. So at the very moment when we should have stayed in harbour, we so far forgot ourselves as to run out again to sea. The storm opened with north winds and with heavy rain during the moonless night, presently the winds raged without measure, and the sea became deeply churned up. As to ourselves, exactly what you might expect at such a crisis took place. I will not dilate a second

time on the identical sufferings, I will only say that the very magnitude of the storm was helpful. First the sailyard began to crack, and we thought of tightening up the vessel; then it broke in the middle and very nearly killed us all. It seems that this very accident, failing to destroy us, was the means of our salvation. We should never have been able to resist the force of the wind, for again the sail was intractable and defied all our efforts to take it in. Contrary to all prevision we had shaken off the rapacious violence of our enforced run, and were carried along during a day and a night, and at the second crowing of the cock, before we knew it, behold we were on a sharp reef which ran out from the land like a short peninsula. Then a shout went up, for some one passed the word that we had gone aground on the shore itself. There was much shouting and very little agreement. The sailors were terrified, whereas we through inexperience clapped our hands and embraced each other. We could not sufficiently express our great joy. And yet this was accounted the most formidable of the dangers that had beset us. Now when day appeared, a man in rustic garb signalled and pointed out which were the places of danger, and those that we might approach in safety. Finally, he came out to us in a boat with two oars, and this he made fast to our vessel. Then he took over the helm, and our Syrian gladly relinquished to him the conduct of the ship. So after proceeding not more than fifty stadia, he brought her to anchor in a delightful little harbour, the name of which I believe is Azarium,¹ and there disembarked us on the beach. We acclaimed him as our saviour and good angel. A little while later he brought in another ship, and then again another, and before evening had fallen we were in all five vessels saved by this godsent old man, the very reverse of Nauplius² in his actions, for the latter received the shipwrecked in

¹ Ptolemy mentions a mount Azarion in Libya, and Pliny (*N.H.* vi. 29, 33, § 168) speaks of the *Asaraei*.

² Nauplius, a son of Poseidon and king of Euboea, the father of Palamedes. He was so incensed at the treatment his son had received at the hands of the Greeks that he set up a burning torch on the promontory of Caphareus to deceive the Greek vessels that

a vastly different manner. On the following day other ships arrived, some of which had put out from Alexandria the day before we set sail. So now we are quite a great fleet in a small harbour.

Now provisions began to run short. So little accustomed were we to such accidents and so little had we anticipated a voyage of such length, that we had not brought a sufficient stock and, what is more, we had not husbanded what we had on board. The old man had a remedy for this also. He did not give us anything himself, and he certainly did not look like one who had possessions. But he pointed out rocks to us where, he said, breakfast and supper were hidden away for those willing to work for it daily. Forthwith we set ourselves to fishing, and we have lived on the produce of our sport now seven days. The more stalwart of our party hunted out eels and lobsters of great size, and the children made a great game of catching gudgeons and shrimps. As to the Roman monk¹ and myself, we fortified ourselves with limpets, a concave shell which attaches itself very firmly to the rocks. In the first stages of this life of ours we fared ill enough. Every one kept avariciously whatever he could get hold of, and no one gave a present to his neighbour, but now we have abundance, and this is how it all happened. The Libyan women would have offered even bird's milk to the women of our party. They bestowed upon them all the products of earth and air alike; to wit, cheeses, flour, barley cakes, lamb, poultry and

were sailing back from Troy, and thus caused their shipwreck on the coast. The signal, according to the legend, was so arranged that the Greeks should mistake it for a friendly sign inviting them to land. See Apollodorus, ii. 1, 5 (p. 142 ed. Loeb); Crinagoras, *Greek Anthology*, iii. no. 429; Loeb Classical Library:

Τὸν σκοπὸν Εὐβοίης ἀλικύμονος ᾗσαν Ἀριστῶ,
Ναύπλιον· ἐκ μολπῆς δ' ὁ θρασὺς ἐφλεγόμην,
ὁ ψεύστης δ' ὑπὸ νύκτα Καφηρεῖς ἀπὸ πέτρης
πυρρὸς ἐμὴν μετέβη δυσμόρον ἐς κραδίην.

'Aristo sung of Nauplius, the watchman of sea-beaten Euboea, and the song set me on fire, valiant as I am. The flame of that false beacon shown in the night from the rock of Caphereus caught my ill-fated heart.'

¹ Druon supposes that the Roman monk is the old man mentioned above, who guided the ship to anchorage; Crawford, on the other hand, speaks of him as a fellow passenger of Synesius.

eggs; one of them even made a present of a bustard, a bird of very delicious flavour. A yokel would call it at first sight a peacock. They bring these presents to the ship, and our women accept them and share them with those who wish it. At present they who go fishing have become generous—a man, a child, comes to me one after another, and makes me a present, now a fish caught on the line, invariably some dainty that the rocks produce. To please you I take nothing from the women, that there may be no truce between them and me, and that I may be in no difficulty about denial, when I have to abjure all connexion with them. And yet what was to hinder me from rejoicing in necessities? So much comes in from all sides. The kindness of the inhabitants of the country towards their women guests you probably attribute to their virtue alone. Such is not the case; and it is worth while to explain all this to you, particularly as I have so much leisure. The wrath of Aphrodite, it would seem, lies heavy on the land; the women are as unlucky as the Lemnians;¹ their breasts are overfull and they have disproportionately large chests, so that the infants obtain nourishment held not by the mother's arm, but by her shoulder, the nipple being turned upwards. One might of course maintain that Ammon and the country of Ammon is as good a nurse of children as of sheep, and that nature has there endowed cattle and humanity alike with fuller and more abundant fountains of milk, and so to that end are ampler breasts or reservoirs needed. Now, when these women hear from men who have had commerce with others beyond the frontier, that all women are not like this, they are incredulous. So when they fall in with a foreign woman, they make up to her in every way until they have gained their object, which is to examine her bosom, and then the woman who has examined the stranger tells another,

¹ Apollodorus, i. 9, 17. Aphrodite to revenge herself upon the Lemnian women who had neglected her cult, gave them a disagreeable odour which rendered them intolerable to their husbands. Cf. Juvenal, xiii. 162:

Quis tumidum guttur miratur in Alpibus? Aut quis
In Meroe crasso maiorem infante mamillam?—Druon, p. 446.

and they call one another like the Cicones,¹ they flock together to the spectacle and bring presents with them. We happened to have with us a young female slave who came from Pontus. Art and nature had combined to make her more highly chiselled than an ant. All the stir was about this one, and she made much gain from the women, and for the last three days the richest in the neighbourhood have been sending for her, and have passed her on from one to the other. She was so little embarrassed that she readily exhibited herself in undress.

So much for my story. The divinity has shaped it for you in mingling the comic with the tragic element. I have done likewise in the account I have given you. I know this letter is too long, but as when with you face to face, so in writing to you I am insatiable, and as it is by no means certain that I shall be able to talk with you again, I take all possible pleasure in writing to you now. Moreover, by fitting the letter into my diary, about which I take great pains, I shall have the reminiscences of many days. Farewell; give my kindest messages to your son Dioscurus and to his mother and grandmother, both of whom I love and look upon as though they were my own sisters. Salute for me the most holy and revered philosopher,² and give my homage also to the company of the blessed who delight in her oracular utterance. Above all to the worthy and holy Theotecnus, and my friend Athanasius. As to our most sympathetic Gaius, I well know that you, like myself, regard him as a member of our family. Do not forget to remember me to them, as also to Theodosius, who is not merely a grammarian of the first order, but one who, if he really be a diviner, has certainly succeeded in deceiving us. He surely must have foreseen the incidents of this voyage, for he finally gave up his desire to come with me. However, that is a matter that does not signify. I love and embrace him.

¹ A people on the coast of Thrace. *Od.* ix. 47:

τόφρα δ' ἄρ' οἰχόμενοι Κίκονες Κικόνεσσι γηγώνευν.

² Hypatia, to whom, under this title 'to the Philosopher', seven of the letters are addressed.

As for you, may you never trust yourself to the sea, or at least, if you really must do so, let it not be at the end of a month.

5

To the Elders

141

'It is well to trust in God, rather than to trust in man.'¹ Nevertheless, I hear that those who have taken up the godless heresy of Eunomius² are putting forward a certain Quintianus and the boasted influence they themselves possess at court, to the end that they may again sully the Church; and that certain false teachers are spreading their nets for the souls of weaker brethren. These are the very ones whom the acolytes of Quintianus recently landed upon our shores, and for this very purpose. Their litigation is merely a cloak for their impiety, or even worse, a struggle on behalf of their impiety. An adulterous generation are these elders, modern apostles of the devil and of Quintianus. Beware then lest they privily attack the flock you are shepherding. Beware lest they privily sow tares amidst your wheat. Their lairs are well known to all. You know well what estates harbour them, you know what houses are open to these bandits. Pursue these brigands, nosing out their trail. Seek eagerly for yourselves the blessing that Moses invoked on those who armed themselves heart and hand against traitors in the camp.³ And this, my brethren, is a thing worth saying to you: 'Let the honourable be honourably done.' I counsel you to let all struggle for lucre be put aside, let all be undertaken for God alone: it were ill indeed that virtue and vice should rest on the same foundation. The race is for holiness;

¹ Psalms cxvii. 8.

² Eunomius of Cappadocia, bishop of Cyzicus about 360, played an important part in the Arian heresy. He attempted to develop a formal doctrinal system, the followers of which were known as 'Anomoeans'. 'Successive imperial edicts, one of Arcadius, dated not more than four years after his death, A. D. 398, commanded that his books should be burnt, and made the possession of any of his writings a capital crime. . . . His *Exposition of Faith* and his *Apologeticus* are the only pieces extant of any length.'—Murray's *Dictionary of Christian Biography* (London, 1911), p. 312.

³ Numbers xxv. 10-13.

we must struggle for men's souls, that no one may plunder them from the Church, as these men have too successfully done in the past. He who governs the Church only to make his own purse heavier, and who by seeming useful in times which call for astuteness, builds up power for himself thereby, that man is one that we must sever from all communion with Christians. God has not made Virtue other than perfect; it needs not evil as an ally. Soldiers worthy of churches will never be lacking to God. He will find allies for the cause, unrewarded here below, but fully rewarded in Heaven. Be ye of the number. It is quite as just to curse evil-doers as it is to pray with those that walk uprightly. Whosoever weakens and betrays his cause, and whosoever comes forward in it only to lay his hands on another's possessions, may such an one never be sinless in the eyes of God. Make this alone your cardinal point, therefore, to circumvent these evil bankers who adulterate the divine decree as if it were coin. Make all see them in their true light, and thus have them disfranchised and banished from the frontiers of Ptolemaïs, taking whatever they brought with them, unweighed. Whosoever shall act contrary to these instructions, may he be accursed before God.

If perchance some one there may be who has seen a nefarious meeting and overlooked the matter, or pretends not to have heard what he has heard, or (who) even allows himself to be corrupted by baser gain at their hands, any one of these men we order to be put under such ban as was ordained in the case of the Amalekites, from whom it is not lawful to carry off spoils, and of him who takes them God says 'I repent me that I made Saul king.'¹ May He never have to repent that any of you are his. Be ye all devoted to the service of God, that he may care for us.

¹ 1 Samuel xv. 11: 'It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments.'

6

*To Anysius*¹

137

This Carnas is taking his time about it. Neither of his own free will, nor forced by necessity will he ever become an honest man. However that may be, he must come before us soon, that we may hear what he has to say, and see how he will look us in the face, from whom even against our will he wanted to buy a horse which he had stolen, on the ground that a soldier cannot be horseless. Furthermore, he offers me a purely nominal price for it, and refuses to hand it over to us although we had never handed it over to him. The worst of it is that he seems to be under the impression that the horse belongs to him by right and equity; and all this although he is neither an Agathocles nor a Dionysius, men of whom tyrannical powers have made chartered libertines, but merely a Carnas of Capharodis, whom it would not be difficult to bring to account for his conduct before the law. If any one, therefore, brings him before you, let me know, that I may bring from Cyrene witnesses who will confound him.

7

*To Theodorus and his Sister*²

8

How do you think I felt in my heart's depths when the rumour was spread about town that you were struggling with a dangerous or even worse than dangerous attack of ophthalmia, and that you were

¹ Anysius is one of several generals mentioned by Synesius in the course of these letters. The Letters 14, 37, 59, 77, 78, 94, are also addressed to him. Letter 77 might indicate that he had left Pentapolis before the arrival of Andronicus. Crawford, however, dismisses this interpretation. It seems fairly certain that the man referred to in the indictment of Andronicus (Ep. 57) was Anysius. Synesius seems to have had a boundless admiration for him. He defeated the Ausurians notably in one engagement. Anysius is eulogized in the first and second Catastases. Druon gives 412 as the probable date of this letter.

² Theodorus, an officer in the Imperial Body-guard, was Synesius' brother-in-law, married to his sister Stratonice, whom he mentions in Ep. 75 as 'the dearest to me of my sisters'.

threatened with the loss of your eyesight ? Soon, however, the story was proved to be false. I suppose some downright rascal took advantage of the word *ophthalmia* in order grossly to exaggerate the report and to make out a tragic situation. May all that he said falsely about you return upon his own head ! God be praised that he has granted us to hear better news of you ! But after all, do you expect us, as the proverb goes, to read news of you in the stars ? Or to find out what rumour has to say ? We ought indeed to have you with us, but failing that, we might at least be favoured with letters from you, and learn about your own affairs from yourself. You really neglect us too much. Perchance it is God that so wills it.

You will not tell me, I am sure, that you were ignorant of the departure of the messenger who carries the Paschal letters. Rather was it that, seeing him, you took no notice of him, and it did not seem to you worth your while to call your brother to mind, and to send a letter to let him know how you were, and the state of your affairs in general. Whatever concerns you is always a matter of interest to me ; for, as I am in trouble about all my own affairs, I would fain rejoice in yours ; but you deprive me even of this consolation. You should not have treated me thus, let alone the fact that we are born of the same parents, were brought up together, and have had our education in common. What indeed has not been given in common to both of us ? Everything has combined to unite us in every way to each other. Truly, adversity is a terrible thing to face, or so they say, and when disastrous times come to any one, all things in this world, the sentiments of brothers and friends included, are put to the test. I shall be quite content, however, to have some news of you, even though it be from others. Only let God be the dispenser of good things, for I desire to hear some such good tidings concerning you.

9

*To the Archbishop Theophilus*¹

116

Most holy and wise prelate, may a long and comfortable old age await you! A great boon it were to us in other respects, the prolongation of your life; and the greatest contribution to Christian teaching is this series of Paschal letters, which grows as the years pass. The one that you have this year sent us has both instructed and charmed our cities, as much by the grace of its language as by the grandeur of its thoughts.

10

*To the Philosopher (Hypatia)*²

156

I salute you, and I beg of you to salute your most happy comrades for me, august Mistress. I have long been reproaching you

¹ For Theophilus see Introduction, pp. 31, 44, 47, etc. He played the most important part in the life of Synesius, for it was owing to his insistence that the latter was persuaded to accept the bishopric, and also to the extraordinary latitude that he seems to have allowed him in the matter of reservations in regard to the dogmas of the Church, and the ecclesiastical rules regarding the conduct of married bishops. It was he who performed the marriage ceremony of Synesius at a time when there is every reason to believe that he had not as yet embraced Christianity. It has been inferred from this that Synesius' wife was a Christian. A number of letters are addressed to Theophilus, viz. Letters 9, 66, 67, 68, 69, 76, 80, 90.

² At Alexandria Synesius became a pupil of the once celebrated Hypatia. Very little is known about this rarely gifted woman, and it is only from the seven letters he has addressed to her that we can form some picture of her in our minds. The church historian, Socrates, has described her in the following words, words in which his sincere admiration is evident: 'The daughter of the philosopher Theon, she was so learned that she surpassed all contemporary philosophers. She carried on the Platonic tradition derived from Plotinus, and instructed those who desired to learn in all philosophic discipline. Wherefore all those wishing to work at philosophy streamed in from all parts of the world, collecting around her on account of her learned and courageous character. She maintained a dignified intercourse with the chief people of the city. She was not ashamed to spend time in the society of men, for all esteemed her highly, and admired her for her purity.' This account of Socrates is confirmed by Philostorgius and Damascius. The latter extols her striking beauty and her chastity, and relates that she gave her lectures publicly in the streets of the town, and was entrusted by the authorities of Alexandria with the direction of the Neoplatonic School, for which office she received a salary. Of her writings nothing remains. Suidas mentions a commentary on the arithmetic of Diophantus, and one on the conic

that I am not deemed worthy of a letter, but now I know that I am despised by you all for no wrongdoing on my part, but because I am unfortunate in many things, in as many as a man can be. If I could only have had letters from you and learnt how you were all faring—I am sure you are happy and enjoying good fortune—I should have been relieved, in that case, of half my own trouble, in rejoicing at your happiness. But now your silence has been added to the sum of my sorrows. I have lost my children, my friends, and the goodwill of every one. The greatest loss of all, however, is the absence of your divine spirit. I had hoped that this would always remain to me, to conquer both the caprices of fortune and the evil turns of fate.

II

To the Elders

112

I was unable, for all my strength, to prevail against you and to decline the bishopric, and this in spite of all my machinations; nor is it to your will that I have now yielded. Rather was it a divine force which brought about the delay then, as it has caused my acceptance now. I would rather have died many deaths than have taken over this religious office, for I did not consider my powers equal to the burden. But now that God has accomplished, not what I asked, but what He willed, I pray that He who has been the Shepherd of my life may become also the defender of His charge. How shall I, who have devoted my youth to philosophic leisure and to the idle contemplation of abstract being, and have only mingled as much in the cares of the world as to be able to acquit myself of duties to the life of the body and to show myself a citizen—how, I say, shall I ever be equal to a life of daily routine? Again, if I deliver myself over to a host of practical matters, shall I ever be able to apply myself to the fair things of the mind which may be gathered sections of Apollonius Pergaeus. Philostorgius, the Arian historian, notes that she excelled her father Theon in astronomy.

11. Druon conjectures this letter to have been written in 410. The question of conscience raised in it greatly tormented the mind of Synesius. Perhaps the best statement of his views on the subject of his moral right to accept the bishopric is that contained in Ep. 105, to his brother Euoptius.

in happy leisure alone? Without all this, would life be worth living to me, and to all those who resemble me? I, for one, know not, but to God they say all things are possible, even impossible things.¹ Do you therefore lift up your hands in prayer to God in my behalf, and give orders both to the people in the town, and as many as inhabit the fields or frequent the village churches, to offer prayers for us alike in private and in the congregation. If I am not forsaken by God, I shall then know that this office of Priesthood is not a decline from the realms of philosophy, but, on the contrary, a step upwards to them.

12

To Cyril

151

Go, my brother Cyril, to your mother the Church, from whom you have not been excommunicated, but only separated for a period which is measured according to that which your shortcomings deserve. I feel sure that our common Father of holy memory would have taken this step long ago if the fatal hour had not come too soon; for to shorten the term of your penalty was clearly the act of one whose heart prompted him to pardon. Consider then that that sacred priest has himself given you permission to return, and approach God with a soul free from suffering and enjoying amnesty from evil. Hold, moreover, in all happy memory that sacred elder dear to God, who appointed you a leader of the people. May all this be not without joy to you!

13

To Peter the Elder

136

May God direct my every deed and word. I have just sent you the carrier with the Paschal letters, announcing the date of the holy

12. This letter seems to have been written after the death of Theophilus. It may be gathered that Cyril was a presbyter, and for some fault had been excommunicated by Theophilus.

13. Petavius points out that the heading of this letter is erroneous, for the text shows that it must have been addressed to more than one. He regards it as having been sent by Synesius from Alexandria shortly after his ordination.

¹ S. Matt. xix 26.

festival as the nineteenth of Pharmuthi, so that the night which precedes the day in question may also be consecrated to the mystery of the Resurrection. Show the messenger every consideration both on his arrival and at his departure. Let him have a change of horses each time. This is only fair to him, for he runs the risk of falling into the hands of armed enemies in undertaking to traverse so hostile a country in order to save an old ancestral custom of the Church from disappearing. This letter also begs the city to offer up prayers for me. The city ought thus to understand the imprudence it committed towards me in appointing one to the priesthood who had not sufficient confidence in his mission to enable him to go to God and pray on behalf of the whole people, but one who has need of the prayers of the people for his own salvation. A conjunction of circumstances has brought this gathering here at the very moment when I was trying to write to you. A Synod is now in session here, attended by many prelates. If I can say none of the things which you are accustomed to hear, there must be forgiveness for me and blame to yourselves, for instead of choosing one deep in the knowledge of the scriptures, you have selected one who is ignorant of them.

Thus do sons defend their own fathers! I thank you for this. Carnas came to me as a suppliant, and God Himself made the prayer more sacred. How can a priest overlook the arrest of a man, on his own mandate too, during a day of fasting? Whoever, therefore, brought him, did not surrender the fellow, but was deprived of him by force. Wherefore, if on account of this violence I am to be punished, I have come to the point of showing humanity to those who have wronged me, and of having wronged the very people who have done no wrong.

¹ For Anysius, see Letter 6.

15

To the Philosopher (Hypatia)

52

I am in such evil fortune that I need a hydroscope. See that one is cast in brass for me and put together. The instrument in question is a cylindrical tube, which has the shape of a flute and is about the same size. It has notches in a perpendicular line, by means of which we are able to test the weight of the waters. A cone forms a lid at one of the extremities, closely fitted to the tube. The cone and the tube have one base only. This is called the baryllium. Whenever you place the tube in water, it remains erect. You can then count the notches at your ease, and in this way ascertain the weight of the water.

16

To the Philosopher (Hypatia)

157

I am dictating this letter to you from my bed, but may you receive it in good health, mother, sister, teacher, and withal benefactress, and whatsoever is honoured in name and deed. For me bodily weakness has followed in the wake of mental suffering. The remembrance of my departed children is consuming my forces, little by little. Only so long should Synesius have lived as he was still without experience of the evils of life. It is as if a torrent long

15. From the opening phrase of this letter it has been surmised that illness was the cause of Synesius' request for a hydroscope—to test the quality of water or other liquid medicine. The exact nature of this hydroscope is uncertain. See Druon, p. 480. The following is an extract from the *Journal des Savants*, 20 March, 1679: 'Pierre de Fermat was of opinion that the instrument was designed to measure the weights of different sorts of water, for on placing it in the water to be tested, it would sink more or less according to the relative lightness or heaviness of the water.' Crawford, p. 150: 'The notches cut in the cylinder showed how much of the instrument was immersed in the liquid, and determined its weight. The . . . instrument, as ordered by Synesius, . . . corresponds in every respect to a primitive conception of a hydrometer. The more modern instruments of the kind have two hollow spherical balls upon the stem, the smaller at the bottom, instead of the cone of Synesius; it contains mercury, to give it considerable weight and keep the stem upright; while the larger ball is above it, and serves to give the instrument sufficient buoyancy.'

16. Druon places this letter the last in his chronological arrangement, in the year 413

pent up had burst upon me in full volume, and as if the sweetness of life had vanished. May I either cease to live, or cease to think of the tomb of my sons! But may you preserve your health and give my salutations to your happy comrades in turn, beginning with father Theotecnus and brother Athanasius, and so to all! And if any one has been added to these, so long as he is dear to you, I must owe him gratitude because he is dear to you, and to that man give my greetings as to my own dearest friend. If any of my affairs interests you, you do well, and if any of them does not so interest you, neither does it me.

17

*To Heliodorus*¹

53

May all blessings fall to the lot of the man, whoever he is, inasmuch as he extols your dignity in pious reminiscences! He has filled the ears of all with your praises, those which are due to your heart of gold and to your tongue. However, you are promptly returning thanks for his good words. They are ever bringing him in return the praises of countless of your devoted friends, amongst whom I myself dispute the pre-eminence; nay, rather I dispute not at all, for all agree with me.

18

To his Brother

67

This man is a senator² of the city in which my children were born to me. In some way or other we ought to honour all the people of Alexandria as fellow citizens and look upon them as such. What is more, he is a relation of that blessed Theodorus who is ever in our memories, and moreover he is by no means to be overlooked by such as hold the first rank in this city. These men have brought him to me with money for you to pay your troops. They have asked me to write a letter recommend-

¹ There are two other letters addressed to Heliodorus—Letters 25, 117. In the latter Synesius speaks of him as one who has influence with the Prefect of Egypt. He may have been, as Crawford suggests, an orator.

² The senator in question is probably Ammonius. See Letter 20.

ing him to your good graces, being assured that everything will go smoothly with him if he gets a letter of introduction from me to you and to a certain person. What they asked of me I have granted, and if not in vain, it will be for you to make manifest.

19

*To Herodes and Martyrius*¹

68

In writing a letter to you in common, I consider that I am in no way at fault. Rather would it have been a just reproach to me if I had divided in my letters those who are united in my heart. Accept all my best wishes, my dear friends, and to the man who is delivering the letter to you, who has journeyed on the public highway to convey gold to you, extend the warmest possible welcome, for he has been recommended to me by the entire senate. I should like to be of some use to him. In fact, I do not know that others should care more for us and for the things we may undertake than you do.

20

*To Diogenes*²

69

The blessed Theodorus³ was during his lifetime a popular host to all the citizens of Pentapolis. He particularly attached my own parents to himself by the great kindness he showed them in every possible way, and by his delightful conversation and charm. Let us recall the grace of his many delightful traits by our actions in favour of his kinsman, Ammonius.⁴ I have paid my meed of grati-

¹ Herodes: compare Letter 38, where Synesius recommends him to Aurelian as a magistrate, and a kinsman of his own. Of Martyrius little is known.

² Diogenes, to whom this letter is addressed, was a cousin of Synesius, and a native of Cyrene. See Letters 23, 99, 119, 131, 134.

³ The Theodorus mentioned here is the same as that alluded to in Letters 21, 32 and Letter 18, q. v. 'I picture him to myself as a grand seigneur, with the manners of a Maecenas, magnificent in his hospitality, in his patronage, and in his conversation, whenever his compatriots visited the country, whether literary or business men.' Lapatz, p. 253.

⁴ The senator mentioned in Letter 18 is evidently the Ammonius of this letter, probably a senator of Alexandria.

tude. And what was the duty of the absent but to commend this man to such as are near him at the moment? It is your duty to see that his stay among you should not be irksome to him.

21

To the Governor

70

If your Excellency should remember Theodorus (and how could it be otherwise?), I beg you will show your respect for his kinsman by honouring him in the same way. By kind treatment to an excellent man you will confer a favour on the senate of our illustrious Alexandria; they all in a body recommended the man to me, and begged me to help him with letters of introduction. I have done all that I can in this matter now that I have written to you. Whether my efforts prove of any use to him, rests entirely with yourself.

22

*To Anastasius*¹

81

I am rejoiced, but for what reason, think you? From the very bottom of my heart I am rejoiced when I hear that these golden children have by the word of the Emperor become legally your own. Most of all do I rejoice because of my love for you. Whom should I love with more justice? Then again, I abhor those wicked creatures whose hopes, fostered in dark and secret places, this good fortune of the children has destroyed.

¹ Anastasius is mentioned in Letter 100 as one of Synesius' dearest friends. Petau, Druon, Lapatz, and Crawford agree in explaining this letter as referring to the appointment of Anastasius to the post of tutor to the Emperor Arcadius's children. Lapatz, who fixes its date at 407, remarks that of the four children then living, the youngest, Flaccilla, would have been four years old, Theodosius six, Arcadia seven, and Pulcheria eight. This on the authority of Sozomenus. In Letter 79 he is mentioned as a person of political importance, and his help is solicited to put an end to the cruelties of Andronicus. We learn also from the same letter that Zenas had threatened him with an action for dishonest conduct in the embassy (*παρὰ πρεσβεία*). Lapatz supposes that there are three of the name Anastasius mentioned in these letters. Grützmacher dates the appointment of Anastasius as tutor to the children at the end of the year 405, and gives the dates of birth as follows: Flaccilla 397, Pulcheria 399, Arcadia 401, and Theodosius 401. According to the same authority a rupture took place between the friends: see Letter 46. Letters 43 and 79 are also addressed to him.

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23 *To Diogenes*¹ 96

The luxury of Syria is such that it makes men forget friends and relations. It is five months now since you have greeted me with a letter, though you have received from Nature herself an exceptional gift for dictating, not merely letters on daily affairs, but letters destined to be known and admired. If you are in good health, however—you, your golden children, and their mother, happy in her fair offspring,—I am quite satisfied.

24 *To Simplicius*² 95

Assuredly it is fitting that one's sentiments should not be exalted by turns of fortune, nor should the memory of one's past friends be deemed of less consequence than one's present dignities. You have been forgetful of us for a long time; this is not at all right, when one considers the strong affection which so intimately united us aforetime.

25 *To Heliodorus*³ 54

The power of love's spell grows stronger in me with my advancing years. Now if it is the same with you, but if your innumerable occupations are such an obstacle in its way that they leave you no

¹ For Diogenes see Letter 20.

² There are two other letters addressed to this correspondent, viz. Letters 28 and 130. In his youth he had held some office in Pentapolis. He was a man of literary attainments and a soldier. This letter seems to have been sent him when living at Constantinople. The date which Druon assigns to it is 408. Lapatz (p. 397), quoting Godefroy (vol. vii, pp. 16-18), asserts that at the end of the reign of Arcadius, Simplicius occupied the supreme position of commander of the militia—one of the four great offices of the state, involving both the direction of the military forces of the empire and the functions of a minister of war. In the year 409 Simplicius sends Cerialis to Pentapolis as military commander. This officer turning out even more disastrously than his predecessors, Synesius complains bitterly to his friend—with whom he seems to have been linked by literary sympathies.

³ See Letters 17 and 117.

time duly to honour now and again with a letter those to whom a letter is due; if you cannot snatch a moment from your affairs of state to write such a letter, at all events let me know that such is the case. If, on the other hand, you admit that the suspicion of your forgetfulness is justifiable, right the matter at once by your repentance, and restore yourself to us once more.

26

*To Troilus*¹

131

Even if neither the people of Cyrene, nor those of the neighbouring towns extend you the gratitude that you deserve for the fact that the great Anastasius writes to them, nevertheless, the grace of God will be with you, to whom you will be dear for the part you have taken in forwarding good works. Be happy, most excellent of philosophers; so I delight to call you, for your acts speak for themselves.

27

*To Constans*²

107

If you hold the virtue of philosophy in esteem, you will honour it not merely in those of the present day who have their share in it, but also in those who are dead and gone. The divine Amyntianus, for a time once with us, has obtained a better lot, and is, I think, present, though he appears to be absent. A near relation of this man, his own cousin, is being attacked by your own Soterichus. Show a little interest yourself in behalf of Dionysius, and Soterichus will immediately stop attacking him.

¹ We learn from Socrates that Troilus was a native of Side, and a celebrated teacher of rhetoric. Crawford and Lapatz think that Socrates was one of his pupils. (See Lapatz, p. 265; Crawford, p. 406.) In Letter 123 Synesius writes to him with every expression of affection and admiration. The following letters are addressed to him: 26, 73, 91, 111, 112, 118, 119, 123.

² Of Constans nothing is known except what may be gathered from this letter. He probably belonged to the group of friends, such as Anastasius and Simplicius, whom Synesius met at Constantinople, and was connected with the witty circle of the Panhellenium. So at least thinks Grützmacher, who adds (p. 67), 'Just then it was considered good fashion that the superior officials and military men should at least assume the appearance of having something to spare for philosophy and poetry, even if this only amounted to superficial diletantism.'

28

To Simplicius

143

God declares that we ought to cancel debts which are owing to us.¹ One man owes us a sum of money, another, payment of the penalty of justice. The man, therefore, who scorns to accept this penalty, is obedient unto God.

29

*To Pentadius the Augustalis*²

61

As to the crowd of people who come to see you from me, and as to their affairs, you have only yourself to blame for their coming. The fact of the matter is that you are too zealous to make it evident to all that you hold me in great honour, and thus you have laid me open to a perfect influx of people in trouble. Do you know how to take action to put a stop to my being tormented by innumerable applicants, and to your being troubled by me in turn with so many? Why, in this way, of course. Even admitting that the individual in whose behalf I may be writing, is a man who needs just and kind treatment, and is most worthy of these in the eyes of all, none the less send him empty away, as if he were a thoroughly dishonest man, and one making utterly dishonorable requests to you. Nay even if I come myself, of course to make a complaint to you, give orders to your servants to slam the door in my face. When people begin to see what has happened, and others hear from those who have seen, then at last you and I will enjoy peace and quiet. No one henceforth will rush to me with grievances. If, however, you are too timid for this, and if you do not wish men to witness such conduct on your part, be prepared to extend your favours many times a day to such as have become your suppliants in my name and in the name of God. After all, I know only too well that you will not renounce doing good—not for a moment, nor shall I tire of giving you suitable opportunities for doing so.

¹ Matt. vi. 12 ; Luke xi. 4.

² Pentadius was Prefect of Egypt ; the title *Augustalis* had been used in this sense since the second half of the fourth century (Pauly-Wissowa, ii. 2361). He seems to have been a philosopher. The letter following (30) is the only other addressed to him. In Letter 127 he is described as a wise ruler and a popular man.

I am anxious about you, and also about this man ; for you, that you may not commit an injustice, for him, that he may not suffer one. If you agree with Plato¹ that it is a greater evil to commit an injustice than to submit to one, I think that it is to you rather than to him that I am doing a service when I plead for this man, who is undergoing sentence for matters in which he has not been at fault.

If cities have souls, as they must, divine guardians and spirits, you may be sure that they are grateful to you and remember your good works, those which you brought about for all nations during your great administration. Believe me that these divinities are at your side, at all times, as advocates and allies, and that they beg the universal God to grant you a becoming recompense for imitating Him to the utmost of your powers. To do good actions is the only trait which God and man have in common. Imitation is an affinity which joins the imitation to that which is imitated. Wherefore consider that you have established an intimacy with God by a communion in the will to work righteousness. Cherish sweet hopes, hopes suited only to such a spirit as your own, you whom I honour as no other man. Yours is a rank which belongs to you alone, or at least very few share it with you. Give all my

¹ Plato, *Gorgias*, 509 c : Διὸς οὖν ὄντοισι, τοῦ ἀδικεῖν τε καὶ ἀδικεῖσθαι, μῆζον μὲν φασιν κακὸν τὸ ἀδικεῖν, ἑλαττον δὲ τὸ ἀδικεῖσθαι. 'Seeing that there are these two evils, the doing injustice and the suffering injustice, we affirm that to do injustice is a greater, and to suffer injustice a lesser evil.'—Jowett.

² Letters 34 and 38 are also addressed to Aurelian. He was consul in the year 400, according to Petau, followed by Druon and Crawford. He was praetorian prefect in 399, 402, and 404. He was baptized shortly after Synesius met him in Constantinople. See Crawford, pp. 24-6 : 'It was according to most authorities at the instances of Aurelian that Synesius obtained his audience with the Emperor and delivered the famous oration *De Regno* in 399, or according to Volkmann 400. This latter date would be after Aurelian's return from exile. Gainas, the chief of the revolted Goths, demanded the disgrace of Aurelian and Saturnius the consuls. Arcadius basely gave in to him, and made a pretence of sending Aurelian into an exile which seems to have lasted only a few months.'

most affectionate messages to your son Taurus, the hope of the Empire. It is a great pleasure to me to communicate them to him by the mouth of a father so revered as yourself.

32

To his Brother

41

The man I quite ignorantly bought as a teacher of gymnastics from the heirs of Theodorus, was a slave both in name and in nature. He was worthless from the beginning, badly born and badly brought up, nor had he failed to receive a training worthy of his natural bent. From his childhood he had wallowed in cock-fighting, in gambling, and in drinking at taverns. To-day, as Lysias would say, all is up with him, he has attained his goal, he is the very limit of all that is unsavoury. He cares not in the very least for Hermes and Herakles,¹ the guardians of the palaestra, but serves Cotytto² and the other Attic gods of lechery, and whatever other demons of that stamp there may be. All these are his, and he is theirs. I have no idea of punishing him in any other way than this. Vice is a sufficient penalty in itself for the vicious, but as a proved wretch of this sort is quite unfit to live with masters who are philosophers, and whom shame haunts in their homes because of such, let him be banished the city that harbours us. At the sight of this debauchee swaggering through the forum, garlanded, perfumed, and drunken, giving way to every excess and singing aloud songs of a piece with the life he leads, every one naturally attributes the fault to his

¹ Heracles was the patron of the palaestra, for obvious reasons. Hermes represented cunning and address (*Ἑρμῆς ἀγῶνιος*). He represented the art of the athlete as distinguished from his force: see Lapatz, p. 292.

² Cotytto, or Cotys, was a Thracian deity resembling in her rites the Phrygian Cybele. The festivals of Cotytto were also celebrated with every sort of licence and debauchery. 'Aeschylus (fr. 57 ed. Nauck) mentions the goddess Cotys amongst the Edoni, and the instruments used in her worship:

"O divine Cotyto, goddess of the Edoni,
With the instruments of the mountain worship."

He then introduces the followers of Dionysus, one holding the bombyces, the admirable work of the turner, with the fingers makes the loud notes resound, exciting frenzy; another makes the brass-bound cotylae to re-echo.'—Strabo, x. 3. 16 (p. 470).

owner. Contrive, therefore, some way of handing him over to the captain of a ship to take him to his native land,¹ for that country may tolerate him with more reason. But during the voyage by all means tie him upon the deck. If he is allowed to go down below, let no one be surprised to find many wine jars half empty. And if the voyage is prolonged, he will drain the perfumed liquid to the dregs. Furthermore, he might incite the whole crew to do these very things, for in addition to other motives, evil is most persuasive when it assumes the leadership for enjoyment's sake. And of those who sail the ocean for pay, who is so austere as not to give way to dissipation at the sight of this pest dancing the *cordax* as he passes round the cup? He is an adept in every sort of buffoonery, and the captain of the ship must steel himself against him. Odysseus indeed passed by the shore of the Sirens fast bound, that he might not succumb to pleasure, and this wretch too will be bound, if the crew are wise, that he may not destroy the ship's company with indulgence.

33

To the Philosopher (Hypatia)

2

I seemed destined to play the part of an echo. Whatever sounds I catch, these I repeat. I now pass on to you the praises of marvellous Alexander. . . .²

34

*To Aurelian*³

17

Not as yet does Providence care for the Romans, but it will care for them some day. They will not lead a quiet life in their houses for ever, they who are themselves able to save the state. As to the

¹ See J. E. B. Mayor in *Journal of Philology*, vol. xv, pp. 174 ff., for this use of ἡ ἐνεγκοῦσα; probably αὐτόν should here be omitted.

² The remaining part of this letter is evidently missing. The Alexander mentioned here seems to be the same to whom allusion is made in Letter 150. We gather from the phrase 'his son, my cousin' employed in that letter, that Alexander was a kinsman of Synesius.

³ Druon argues for the date 398 for this letter. If this date is right, the letter is prophetic of the outburst of wrath against the Goths, and their expulsion from the city. In the last line one seems to get an echo of the doctrines of Zeno the Stoic—

orator, our old housemate, the power you possess at present suffices for what he needs. May he enjoy this protection by himself now, and later also in common with all nations!

35

To his Brother

39

Athanasius has found the shortest road to fortune. He has recognized the necessity of going right to the beds of the dying, and attaining all his own ends with them either by persuasion or by force. The moment a notary is called in to draw up a will, he romps in with him.

36

To his Brother

51

The blessed Castricius died on the sixteenth day of the month of Athyr, after having a terrible vision of which he gave a full account.

37

To Anysius

125

Joannes, whom I love especially because of his affection for you, has been in the grip of a grievous malady. But he is suffering less from his illness than from the disappointment of being separated from your sacred self. He is still in the same state, and in addition to this there is a third thing which is making his illness worse. He is longing to do something that may become a soldier, and he frets against his forced inaction.

the first of the Greek philosophers to proclaim the equality of all races, to conceive dimly of a confederation of the world. Bury (*The Hellenistic Age*, p. 26) says of him: 'He introduced the idea of cosmopolitanism, transcending patriotism; of the whole world, the oecumene, as a man's true fatherland; of a community embracing all rational beings, without regard to the distinction of Greek and barbarian, or of free-man and slave.' Synesius frequently shows signs of the influence of the Stoics.

37. This letter was probably written during the war and before the arrival of Anysius. It is impossible to identify the Joannes mentioned. Druon gives 411 as the date.

38

To Aurelian

25

I think your divine soul must have been sent down for this very thing, the common good of mankind; and also to be grateful to those who introduce to you such men as are seeking their rights, because they supply you with material well suited to your taste. It is not because the young Herodes¹ is my relative that I recommend him to your notice, but because he is seeking his rights. A man most distinguished by his ancestry and one who has inherited a family estate subject to taxation by the Senate, he maintains that since he has become an officer he is contributing taxes on the same scale as the newly appointed senators, and that he is now taxed twice, in the first instance because of his fortune, in the second because of the post he has occupied.²

39

To his Brother

40

Longing and necessity draw me to you. I should like to know, then, whether you will await me if I come to you.

40

To Uranius

56

I have just sent you a present, a horse most perfect in every quality that befits a horse. You will find him useful for racing as well as for hunting and warfare, and when you lead a triumphal procession in honour of the Libyan victory. I do not know for which purpose he is most valuable, whether for hunting or for contests in the hippodrome, or again, whether for parade or

¹ 'This Herodes had received a patrimony under certain liabilities to the Senate, and when he was made an officer (*dux*) he was called to the Senate to be enrolled therein; he was designated under another name, and on this account the double payment was demanded from him as well as a public donation. For this reason Synesius commends him to Aurelian. I understand ἡγεμῶν to refer to officers whose functions were confined to military affairs, those who were termed "spectabiles"'.—Petavius.

² So many public expenses were laid at the doors of the senators that, as Petavius observes, it was often looked on as a penalty to be enrolled in the Senate.

for actual warfare. If he is less beautiful than the horses of Nesa,¹ if he is heavy about the head and too thin about the flanks, perhaps God does not give all points together to horses any more than to men. After all perhaps it is an additional good quality in his case that the soft parts of the body are less developed by nature than the hard. Bones, I know, are more equal to toil than flesh is. Your horses are heavier in flesh, ours in bone.

41

To a Friend

9

I have hired a ship for you furnished with a crew of sailors of good stock, sailors who trust more to skill than chance in navigation. These vessels of the Carpathians² have the reputation of being endowed with intelligence, as were the famed ships of the Phaeacians³ before the wrath of the Gods beat upon their island.⁴

¹ The Nissa referred to here seems to have been south of the Caspian. The Nisian horses from Media (cf. Herod. iii. 106, vii. 40, ix. 20) or Armenia were celebrated, and in favour with the Persian princes, according to Petavius, who quotes Hierocles : ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Περσῶν (βασιλεῦσι!) περισπούδαστος ὁ Νυσσαῖος. In the same passage the horse of Cyrene is equally commended.

² Refers to the island of Carpathos between Rhodes and Crete.

³ *Odyssey*, viii. 555. Alcinous, addressing Odysseus, says :

εἰπὲ δέ μοι γαῖάν τε τεῖν δῆμόν τε πόλιν τε,
ὅφρα σε τῇ πέμπωσι τιτυσκόμεναι φρεσὶ νῆες.
οὐ γὰρ Φαιήκεσσι κυβερνητῆρες ἔασιν,
οὐδέ τι πηδάλι' ἐστί, τά τ' ἄλλαι νῆες ἔχουσιν·
ἀλλ' αὐταὶ ἴσασι νοήματα καὶ φρένας ἀνδρῶν.

'Tell me too of thy land, thy township, and thy city, that our ships may conceive of their course to bring thee thither. For the Phaeacians have no pilots nor any rudders after the manner of other ships, but their barques themselves understand the thoughts and intents of men.'—Butcher and Lang's translation.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xiii. 171.

τοῖσιν δ' Ἀλκίνοος ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν·
"ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ με παλαιάφατα θέσφαθ' ἱκάνει
πατὴρς ἐμοῦ, ὃς φάσκε Ποσειδάων' ἀγάσσεσθαι . . .
φῆ ποτε . . . μέγα δ' ἦμιν ὕρος πόλει ἀμφικαλύψειν."

42

*To Cledonius*¹

119

One of my relatives is suffering from an injustice. You are my friend, and it has fallen to your share to hold the court. You are therefore, in a position to satisfy yourself, myself, and at the same time the law of the land. Accordingly let Asphalius come again into possession of his wine jars in peace, receiving a decision of the court to confirm his father's will. Let not the prosecution impede the immediate hearing of the case, for when should we do justice better than at that moment in which we are especially engaged in lifting up our hands to God?

43

*To Anastasius*²

37

Some God or argument or demon has persuaded Sosenas that something is inherent in certain localities which attracts or repels the blessings of the Divinity, for, not succeeding in our part of the world, he has entirely cut himself off from his own ancestral home.

He departs, for he hopes that journeying to Thrace
E'en there at last his lot may find some saving grace.

If by chance you are in the good graces of the goddess, use all your influence with her in behalf of this young man. May she afford him some opportunity of enriching himself! It is very easy for her if she wishes. The best proof of this is that she turned over to others the property of Nonnus, the father of Sosenas, without any difficulty. Let her, then, make Sosenas the heir of some one else's father. In this way justice will come out of injustice.

'And Alcinous made harangue and spake among them: "Lo now, in very truth the ancient oracles of my father have come home to me. He was wont to say that Poseidon was jealous of us. . . . He said that the day would come when the god . . . would overshadow our city with a great mountain."'"—Butcher and Lang.

¹ Nothing is known concerning the person to whom this letter is addressed.

² There are four letters with this address: Letters 22, 43, 46, 79. There is some obscurity about the identity of the recipient (or recipients). There are no less than three Anastasii to be found in the correspondence of Synesius, says Lapatz. Two of these are from Cyrene, one an intimate friend whom he introduces to Pylaemenes in Letter 100. See Letter 22.

Many a time before this have I come to your assistance. I have softened the harshness of Fate for you, as on each occasion my power enabled me, both in word and deed. To-day, in regard to your present situation, I desire to give you my advice only, for I am powerless to act in the matter. It is not right that Synesius, while he lives and has the power, should fail in eagerness to benefit his friends in every possible way. Hear then what it is befitting that I should say to you.

If Rumour is a goddess, as one of our poets would have it, it was you who made away with the blessed Aemilius, not by any overt act of your own, but because you desired it. You prepared everything for this terrible drama, you selected the assassin, the most bloodthirsty of your band of ruffians. This is the story which Rumour has recounted, and it is not ordained that a divinity should lie. But if Hesiod's words are nothing, or words many but to no purpose, and if this thing concerning you is one of the many (and would that it were so, for I hold loss in money of less moment than loss of a friend), if, I say, being innocent of the

¹ The Joannes to whom this letter is addressed was accused by popular report of murdering, directly or indirectly, his brother Aemilius. Synesius, although addressing him as a friend, couches his whole exordium in rhetorical language, and seems to be addressing himself rather to the public than to his correspondent. It seems to be what in these days would be called 'an open letter'. The Platonic view of the value of punishment as developed in the *Gorgias* is the main argument. 'Elegantissima haec epistola est, atque omnino παράδοχος' is the comment of Petavius. Druon describes it as one of the most singular of the letters: 'A piece of rhetorical pleading, it speaks more to the mind than to the heart.' He does not, however, seem to doubt the sincerity which animates it (see Druon, 69-70). Crawford (p. 318), on the other hand, regards the whole document as a piece of irony: 'The letter to John is a fine piece of satirical writing: the satire of a righteous soul which loathes the wickedness with which it is dealing, but knows itself helpless to do aught to punish it. . . . Synesius has the gift of scathing sarcasm.' The history of literature is not exempt from cases of irony being mistaken for bona fide expression of opinion, as in that of Defoe, whose pamphlet, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, first delighted and then infuriated his opponents.

crime, you are yet evil spoken of, in that case you are an unfortunate man, but not a guilty one, and may you not be even so unfortunate! In the first case you would be deserving of lawful hatred as your portion, in the second case of pity. For my own part, I who am easily won by intimacy, should in that case hate your act, but none the less feel pity for you, and it is the part of the one who has pity, to bear aid to the full extent of his power and to find out where he thinks he may be of assistance. In either case I am bound to tell you what seems to me to be most in your own interest. Innocent or guilty, you will profit by the same advice from me.

Go before the laws and give yourself up to the magistrate, together with all your henchmen, if you have any regard for them. If the crime was committed by you, pray, beg, supplicate, tire not of going down on your knees, even until the moment that judgement shall have been passed upon you, and you shall have been delivered up to the executioner, and shall have paid your penalty. It will be a blessing to you, my dear Joannes, that what has first been purified should so depart to the judges below. Do not think that my warning is a speech with any other sense than this. Do not imagine for a moment that I am jesting with you; so may I have profit of sacred Philosophy, and of my own children besides. I should not have given you any such advice, if you had been no friend of mine, for I pray that this lot may not fall even to my enemies. As for them, may they never take the point of view that it is a nobler thing for the culprit voluntarily to undergo his punishment! May they on the contrary never forgo being prosperous in their sins, in order that they may live in them a longer time, and have to account for them all in that place below!

For the sake of the friendship I feel for you I am running the risk of revealing to you some of the mysteries.¹ There is no

¹ 'If the perception of what is noble is to remain with us, so that no washing may remove it, and throughout all time, we shall after perfecting ourselves in lay studies listen to those which are sacred, and to the *mysteries*.'—Basil, 'Ομιλία πρὸς τοὺς νέους, ii. (Migne, *P. G.* xxxi, p. 568 A).

resemblance between paying the penalty in this crass body and paying it in the soul. God is a stronger force than man, and the human order of things is but a shadow of the divine organization. Now that same office which the public executioners, the hands of the law, fulfil in states, the avenging deities fulfil in the constitution of the universe. There are demons of purification who treat souls as fullers¹ treat soiled garments. If these garments were endowed with consciousness, what would be their suffering, I ask you, while they were being trampled, washed, and combed in every way? With what pain would the old spots and clinging stains be washed away? I need scarcely say that in many cases the soiling is so deeply engrained that it is irremovable, and the stuff will disappear before it returns to its proper form, because corruption has come into its nature, either on account of the lapse of time or of the very greatness of the corruption.

For a soul in such a state, to be perishable would be happiness

¹ The celebrated parable of the dyer's art in Plato's *Republic* (iv. 7, p. 429 D) evidently suggested this passage to Synesius, but he has inverted the image, i. e., it is here the stain, not the original colour, which is so difficult to remove in Synesius' rendering. The passage from the *Republic* is as follows: οὐκοῦν οἶσθα ὅτι οἱ βαφῆς, ἐπειδὴν βουληθῶσι βάψαι ἕρια ὥστ' εἶναι ἀλουργά, πρῶτον μὲν ἐκλέγονται ἐκ τοσούτων χρωμάτων μίαν φύσιν τὴν τῶν λευκῶν, ἔπειτα προπαρασκευάζουσιν οὐκ ὀλίγη παρασκευὴ θεραπεύσαντες, ὅπως δέξεται ὅτι μάλιστα τὸ ἄνθος, καὶ οὕτω δὴ βάπτουσι· καὶ ὁ μὲν ἂν τοῦτω τῷ τρόπῳ βαφῇ, δευσοποιὸν γίγνεται τὸ βαφέν, καὶ ἡ πλῆσις οὗτ' ἀνευ ῥυμμάτων οὔτε μετὰ ῥυμμάτων δύναται αὐτῶν τὸ ἄνθος ἀφαιρεῖσθαι· ἃ δ' ἂν μὴ, οἶσθα οἷα δὴ γίγνεται, ἐάν τις ἄλλα χρώματα βάπτῃ ἐάν τε καὶ ταῦτα μὴ προθεραπεύσας. 'You know that dyers when they want to dye wool for making the true sea-purple, begin by selecting their white colour first; this they prepare and dress with much care and pains, in order that the white ground may take the purple hue in full perfection. The dyeing then proceeds; and whatever is dyed in this manner becomes a fast colour, and no washing either with lyes or without them can take away the bloom. But when the ground has not been duly prepared, you will have noticed how poor is the look either of purple or of any other colour.' Compare also *Republic*, x. 14, p. 616: τὸν δὲ Ἀρδιαῖον καὶ ἄλλους συμποδίσαντες χεῖράς τε καὶ πόδας καὶ κεφαλὴν, καταβαλόντες καὶ ἐκδείραντες, εἰλκον παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ἐκτὸς ἐπ' ἀσπαλάθων κνάμπτοντες, καὶ τοῖς αἰεὶ παριοῦσι σημαίνοντες, ὦν ἕνεκά τε καὶ ὅτι εἰς τὸν Τάρταρον ἐμπεσούμενοι ἀγοῖντο. 'And Ardiaeus and others they bound head and foot and hand, and threw them down and flayed them with scourges, and dragged them along the road at the side, carding them on thorns like wool, and declaring to the passers-by what were their crimes, and that they were being taken away to be cast into hell.'—Jowett's translation.

indeed. But although there are sins which resemble spots that cannot be washed away, the soul is not like that soiled garment whose web does not resist destruction. Eternal as it is, its lot is eternal punishment when it becomes engrained and incurably soiled with sin; but when it has already undergone punishment in that life in which it has sinned, it has not this (eternal) calamity clinging to it and ever present, but as one might say, the soul, newly dyed, is quickly washed clean.

The penalty therefore ought to be paid as quickly as possible, and at the hands of men, rather than at those of demons. A certain story is recounted, which persuades me that those who have been sinned against become the masters eventually—masters with power to lengthen or cut short the terms of punishment. Whether one has done a great injury to one, or a slight injury to many, the result will be very much the same, for each victim will put in his own claims to vengeance, and each one must be satisfied. If a cure is possible, the punishment already undergone by the soul may mollify the Judge, and even incline the victims themselves to indulgence. When then is it likely that the blest soul of Aemilius may be inclined to grant you forgiveness?

I think, or rather I know well, that every suppliant has a claim to respect, once he has expiated his errors by punishing himself. Ere now a man has been summoned before me to defend himself for a crime, and by haste in recognizing his guilt and admitting that he deserves punishment has won his acquittal; whereas to revel in one's crime is to turn into a sullen enemy the man whose life or fortune one has attacked.

But now what will become of you, when you have left your body either by capital punishment or in some other way, when you recognize his soul with your own, and your tongue is unable to make denial, branded as you will be with the fresh-carved image of the event? Will you not be seized with dizziness?¹ Will you not be at a loss? Silent, you will be hurried off. You will be exposed before the Judgement where we are all alike awaited, you, I, and all

¹ Ἐλθὼν παρὰ τὸν δικαστὴν . . . χασμήσει καὶ ἰλιγγιάσεις.—Plato, *Gorgias*, 82, p. 526 *z*.

such as a public repentance has not first purified. Courage then, my noble friend, for I wish you to be noble; despise those pleasures which we purchase by wrong-doing. You must not be ashamed before men, but must confess everything to the magistrate, and endeavour to avert the punishments below by an immediate castigation. For while the greatest good is not to err, the next best is to take punishment for an error.¹

The man who remains unpunished for longstanding sins should be deemed most unfortunate, as one cared for neither by God nor man.

Again, look at it from this point of view. If immunity from punishment is recognized as an evil, punishment itself becomes a benefit, for contrary forces, according to all logic, produce contrary results. If I had only been with you, you would not have made difficulties about putting aside your shame and denouncing yourself. I should have directed myself to your defence, and I should have conducted you to the laws as to physicians. Some stupid fellow might have said 'Synesius is prosecuting Joannes', but you would have known the truth that if I brought the accusation it would be only by mercy and solicitude for you, and with the object of making you fare better in your evil plight. These things I would do if you were guilty. May that not be true for your own sake and for that of the city, for there would be universal pollution therein, if fratricidal blood had been spilled; but if, on the other hand, you are pure in hand and soul, and may it be so, accursed be those who have brought false charges against you. Such men have infernal punishments awaiting them, for no other manner of evil is so abhorred by God as the slanderer who strikes in the dark. Such

¹ Εὐδαιμονέστατος μὲν ἄρα ὁ μὴ ἔχων κακίαν ἐν ψυχῇ, ἐπειδὴ τοῦτο μέγιστον τῶν κακῶν ἐφάνη . . . δεύτερος δὲ ὁ ἀπαλαττόμενος . . . οὗτος δ' ἦν ὁ νοθετούμενός τε καὶ ἐπιπληττόμενος καὶ δίκην διδοῦς. . . . κάκιστα ἄρα ζῇ ὁ ἔχων ἀδικίαν καὶ μὴ ἀπαλαττόμενος. Ibid. 34, p. 478 D. 'He then has the first place in the scale of happiness who has never had vice in his soul; for this has been shown to be the greatest of evils . . . and he has the second place, who is delivered from vice . . . that is to say he who receives admonition and rebuke and punishment. Then he lives worst, who, having been unjust, has no deliverance from injustice.'—Jowett's translation.

a low-minded man carries out much evil, and a certain fated obscenity is said to cling to that class, and to be the strongest element in the art.

In many other ways such men are sophistical and adroit. So if any one is found fabricating false reports, ask no questions, and entertain no doubts. However strong he may appear to be, expose him fearlessly as the effeminate wretch he is, the red-handed disciple of Cotys. It is in your power to secure a conviction for libel on account of these words, if you place yourself and your household at the disposal of the court. Go there and say, 'There are certain people accusing me secretly, who, though self-condemned, attempt to remain concealed; but nevertheless they are bringing many grave charges against me, and are likely to gain some credence, for they are intriguers, and adepts in giving plausibility to their story.' Next let us go through the charges which are the basis of your evil repute, a marriage and an unholy assassination. Since it is said, I think, that a certain debauched wretch committed the murder, some creature in your pay, bring him forward, and beg and pray the court on bended knee not to let the fellow go without submitting him to cross-examination. Let him not be condemned in default. 'Most worthy of judges,' you might say, 'because no one has brought a charge against me in open court, is it less your duty to resort to every inquisition to pursue and to hunt down the truth? Here is the debauched wretch so much talked about; you have your man. Apply your tortures. This man, if any crime has been committed, ought to be shown up this day as my accuser and his own.'

If, when you use such language, the judge does not yield to you, at all events it is sufficient for human beings like us.

If, on the other hand, he should be benevolent and should thank you for your hearing of the case, you can then make a brilliant defence and the slanderers be put to shame and silenced. This wretch must not give himself airs; he shall be bound and hung, and his ribs broken. Torturers are wonderfully efficient in exposing shams. These men possess iron nails which have the force of

learned syllogisms, so that whatever is made manifest when they hold sway, this is truth itself.

If in such wise you are acquitted as an innocent man, you will then come back from the tribunal victorious and exultant, a shining light, and so regarded. Now that I have told you what course I think will most benefit you, should you refuse to follow it and decline to appear before the tribunal, none the less Justice sees and knows the truth. The eye of the goddess, penetrating everywhere, saw Libya, saw that valley, and marked that rumour, whether it be true or false, saw Aemilius turn away in flight. What he suffered and from whom, what he said, what he heard (if indeed he said and heard aught), all this she knows. She knows also that, even admitting you to be blameless and pure before God, and that you have neither committed this abominable deed nor premeditated it, she knows, I say, that even so you are not yet innocent in our eyes as men, so long as you have not made your formal defence. As matters stand, we will not shake hands with you nor eat at the same table with you, for we are in dread of the avenging Furies of Aemilius, lest by contact you may infect us with guilt. We, too, have our own stains—we do not need to take such contributions from others besides.

45

*To Olympius*¹

142

Evil men from without are troubling our Church. Take steps against them. Only nails drive out nails.

¹ To Olympius, one of the most intimate friends of Synesius, are also addressed the following letters : Nos. 96, 97, 98, 99, 133, 148, 149. Crawford (p. 402) thinks it clear that he was a Syrian, and lived in Syria during part of the time to which the correspondence belongs. (See Letters 98, 148.) He was at Alexandria during his student years, and probably met Synesius there for the first time. He was a man of fortune, and lived in luxury—if we are right in interpreting with Lapatz the phrase in Ep. 132 καὶ γὰρ καὶ τότε τὴν τρυφὴν ἐμεψάμην τῶν καταλυμάτων τοῦ συσσιτίου. It appears from this letter that he embraced Christianity.

46

*To Anastasius*¹

149

It was not generous of Amasis to steel his heart against tears over the misfortunes of Polycrates,² misfortunes which he had foreseen. He sent a herald to him while he was still prosperous, to announce the breaking off of the friendship, thus making it evident that he would have also lamented with him had the misfortune preceded this act of rupture. You also stood by us as long as we did not incur the disfavour of Fortune, then later on you disappeared with her. For the story is circulated by those who have come from Thrace, that you neither say nor think any good of me. This is clearly not to renounce friendship: it is to announce enmity. It was quite enough in any case not to share my sorrow, but to add to these sorrows still further surpasses harshness, and is worthy neither of Amasis nor even of a man. No doubt you had an eye for your own interests. Do what you must, so long as you do it rejoicing, for it would only be half an evil, if even by the ills I suffer I could bring pleasure to my friends.

47

*To Theotimus*³

120

Regard Peter also as the scorn of Pentapolis, a fellow who sets about breaking its laws without method, and for my part I detest the man who proceeds about a thing in that way. God knows this, and Dioscurides as well. But this man is much more impudent than the

¹ For Anastasius, see Letter 22. Of the four letters addressed to him this would seem to be the latest. Druon places the date at 412. In Letter 79, which this authority assigns to the previous year, he writes to Anastasius as to an old and trusted friend.

² Amasis sent a herald to Samos to break off the alliance with Polycrates (tyrant of Samos in the sixth century B.C.). He broke it off because he feared that if a great and awful misfortune should befall Polycrates, he would suffer himself as in the case of a friend.

³ Theotimus was a poet with whom Synesius formed a friendship when at Constantinople. He was intimate with Anthemius and Olympius, and was greatly admired by Synesius for his talents. We know nothing about him from other sources. Letter 49 is also addressed to him.

latter, for he first seizes whatever possessions he may desire, and makes them his own; then he goes to law about it, and if the verdict is given against him, he takes them by force. This is how he behaved recently. He possessed himself of a wine-jar; some one summoned him before the court for this; he was condemned, but he refused to give up the object, and threatened the police agents with blows. As I am much annoyed about this, and as I think that life would become insupportable in a city where some private persons have more powerful hands than the laws themselves, I have exhorted the most conspicuous men here to rally to the call, and to come to the help of the constitution. For if this man succeeded, in a little while we should see numerous Peters. The worthy Martyrius fully shares my indignation, and I am very grateful to him for this, and for assisting me more zealously than any one else. May some blessing come to him from God for this! I only hope that he will not encounter any evil at the hands of Anthemius, to whom Peter threatens to appeal. To prevent this, I beg of you, and I make this request, through you, to the renowned and wise Troilus—I beg you, I say, to make it impossible for such a sin-stained creature as this to use the law against the law. I have first the interests of Pentapolis at heart, and second, I should not like to be the cause of misfortune to a friend. How can the intrigues of this wretch be checked? It is not my province to find the answer, but rather yours, O most ingenious of all men in noble purposes.

48

*To Pylaemenes*¹

97

You are quite right to come back to the city where the Emperor dwells. For even if good fortune had attended you in the mountains of Isauria, nevertheless good fortune becomes unfortunate

¹ The friendship between Synesius and Pylaemenes was formed at Constantinople, and continued with every mark of intimacy for the remainder of Synesius' life. The tone in some of the letters addressed to Pylaemenes is that of exalted admiration, coupled with passionate protestations of friendship. The letters are the following, sixteen in number: Letters 48, 61, 71, 74, 88, 100, 101, 102, 103, 129, 131, 134, 150,

because of the place where one is. Moreover I have a personal reason to desire that you should prosper in the palace itself. As long as you are there, you can receive and send letters, the most precious to me of all the exports of Thrace.

49

To Theotimus

92

Hiero enjoyed greater good from his intercourse with Simonides than did Simonides from his with Hiero,¹ but by the divinity who presides over our friendship, I do not congratulate you on your intimacy with the great Anthemius more than I congratulate the great Anthemius himself on his friendship with you. Even for a man who has power, what possession is fairer than a friend who brings him the gift of a sincere character? Such a man I know Theotimus to be, a most amiable man and most beloved of God. However, here is a point in which you are superior to Simonides. Simonides admitted that he gave his discourses for money, but you resemble him in this, that it was Simonides who handed down the fame of Hiero to all posterity, and that, through the poems of

151, 152, 153. Many scholars have called attention to the exaggerated vein of praise which runs through these letters, and the continual return from time to time of self-depreciation. The same note may be found earlier in the letters of Julian the Apostate and of Julian of Caesarea. A tendency to idealize friendship in a somewhat sentimental manner was a fashion of the age, and the influence of the schools of rhetoric in Athens and Alexandria may have been partly responsible for it, but, in spite of some artificiality, no one reading these letters could doubt for a moment the very profound feeling which animated Synesius in regard to his friend.

¹ Simonides was on terms of intimacy with Hiero I, the tyrant of Syracuse, and also with Thero of Agrigentum. The story goes that at a moment when war was impending between Syracuse and Agrigentum, Simonides succeeded in reconciling Hiero and his brother-in-law Thero. On the other hand, we find in the scholia to Aristophanes (*Pax*, 697), Rutherford, vol. ii, pp. 109-10, the following: 'Simonides was, it would seem, the first lyrical poet to treat his art in a mercenary spirit and write for money. It is to this that Pindar alludes in his *Isthmionicae*: "There was a time when the Muse was no hireling. Once when Terpsichore uttered her honied voice in notes sweet, low-toned, her songs were not as merchandise, marked on their face with a price."' Compare Plutarch, *Mor.* 555 F ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ Σιμωνίδης ἔλεγε παίζων, τὴν τοῦ ἀργυρίου κιβωτὸν εὐρίσκειν ἀεὶ πλήρη, τὴν δὲ τῶν Χαρίτων κενήν. The moral of Synesius is that while Hiero derived political wisdom from Simonides, the latter learned nothing but avarice at his court.

Theotimus, Anthemius will be famous in letters as long as Greeks shall exist. May the prosperity of the Romans ever increase, thanks to him ; and thanks to you, the renown of Anthemius, for God has granted to the art of poetry to be a dispenser of renown, and the honour of this has come round to you.

50

To his Brother

66

They say that Joannes killed Aemilius. Another says this is a calumny that his political enemies have put in circulation. Justice only knows the truth, and time will discover it, but although the case is an obscure one, I think all these people should be held in detestation ; the one because, even if he did not commit the crime, he is just the sort of man to commit it, and only incurred an accusation consistent with his way of life ; the others because, if they did not invent the stories, at all events were quite capable of doing so, and the attempt to slander is theirs. But if only a man has a nature that does not lend itself to suspicion, even all the evidence of a multitude of conspirators will not injure his reputation. He would be laughed to scorn who assailed Ajax on the charge of unchastity. But Alexander, even if not debauched, at all events was effeminate, and laid himself open to that imputation. As for Sisyphus and Odysseus,¹ I detest them. Even although they spoke the truth in exceptional cases, they were, nevertheless, the sort of men who generally lie, and in whatever way I may be unlucky, I am very lucky to get rid of such citizens, whether they be friends or enemies. Let me be fortified against all such, and may I have no dealings with any of them ! I would rather live a stranger amongst strangers.

Our way of life separates us more than country. I mourn over the famous site of Cyrene, in the past the abode of the Carneadae and of the Aristippi, but now of the Joannes and the Julii. In their society I cannot live with pleasure, and so I live away from it with pleasure. Do not write again to me therefore about any occurrences there. Do not recommend to my good graces anybody

¹ Sisyphus is mentioned in *Iliad* vi. 153 as κέρδιστος ἀνδρῶν.

who is engaged in a lawsuit, for in future I do not wish to interest myself in any one of them. I should indeed be unfortunate if I were deprived of the good things of my beloved native town, but had to take part in its quarrels and those affairs that drag me away from my ease in philosophy, unfortunate if, when I have chosen poverty as a guerdon from leisure, I should interfere without reward in other men's evil concerns.

51

To his Brother

I

Starting from Phycus at early dawn, late in the evening we stood in to the gulf of Erythra. There we stopped only a sufficient time to drink water and to take in a supply. Springs of pure, sweet water gush forth upon the very shore. As our Carpathians¹ were in a hurry, we took to sea again. The wind was light, but it blew continually on our stern, so that where we expected to make nothing of a run each day, we made all we needed before we were aware of it. On the fifth day we perceived the beacon fire lit upon a tower to warn ships running too close. We accordingly disembarked more quickly than it takes to relate, on the island of Pharos, a poor island where there are neither trees nor fruit, but only salt marshes.

52

To his Brother

42

They say that a fellow who sells boots has come from Athens. It is the same person, I think, from whom you bought for me last year some lacing shoes. Now, according to my information, he has extended the area of his trade; he has robes in the Attic style, he has light summer clothes which will become you, and mantles such as I like for the summer season. Before he sells all these goods, or at least the finest of them, invite the stranger here, for you must remember that the first purchaser will choose the best of everything, without troubling himself about those who come to buy after him, and buy for me three or four of these mantles. In any case whatever you pay, I will repay you many times over.

¹ See the note on p. III.

53

To his Brother

98

Prolixity in a letter argues a certain lack of intimacy with ourselves in the letter-carrier. But my good friend Acacius is as well informed as I myself, and he will tell you even more than he knows, because he is very fond of you, and has a tongue which rises above the facts. So I favour you with this letter, rather from the law of correspondence than from any necessity; but if I announce to you that your son Dioscurius is in good health, that he is reading books, and that he is glued to them, my letter itself will at all events have a certain value for you.

I have given to Dioscurius a whole company of brothers, adding further a pair of manly brothers for Hesychius.¹ May God bestow his blessing on all these, themselves, their brothers, their parents' house, the rest of their family, and their ancestral cities.

54

To his Brother

12

A great number of people, either private individuals or priests, by moulding dreams, which they call revelations, seem likely to do me harm when I am awake, if I do not happen with all speed to visit sacred Athens. Whenever, then, you happen to meet a skipper

¹ Hesychius, the eldest son of Synesius, was named after an old friend, as is apparent from Letter 93. It was for this son in all probability that the *Dion* was written. The Hesychius to whom Letter 93 is addressed seems to have been a man of influence and a student of philosophy. 'Is it too fanciful', says Crawford (p. 35), 'to see in this name, given to the son for whom the "Dion" was written, a prayer that he might enjoy that tranquillity without which . . . it is impossible to live the ideal philosophical life?' This suggestion, however, ignores the fact that the name was quite frequent.

54. This letter throws a curious sidelight on the jealousy which existed in the schools of Alexandria towards the University in Athens, which, of course, was the older institution, and whose life and traditions formed an unbroken chain from the days of Plato and Aristotle. Alexandria, founded by Alexander in 332 B.C., became in the third century B.C., under Ptolemy Soter, the first of his dynasty, a rival centre of learning. With the aid of Demetrius of Phalerum, the philosopher, he laid the foundations of the celebrated Alexandrian library, and *Μουσείον* or school of philosophy. 'The work was continued by Ptolemy Philadelphus, Ptolemy Soter's son. The Museum was an institution for the advancement of scientific learning;

sailing for the Piraeus, write to me, as it is there that I shall receive my letters. I shall gain not only this by my voyage to Athens—an escape from my present evils, but also a relief from doing reverence to the learning of those who come back from Athens. They differ in no wise from us ordinary mortals. They do not understand Aristotle and Plato better than we, and nevertheless they go about among us as demi-gods among mules, because they have seen the Academy, the Lyceum, and the Poecile where Zeno gave his lectures on philosophy. However, the Poecile no longer deserves its name, for the proconsul has taken away all the pictures, and has thus humiliated these men's pretensions to learning.

55

To his Brother

10

At the very moment when you weighed anchor, I pulled up my mules on the western shore. I jumped out of my carriage, but you had already set sail, and the wind was blowing on your stern. Albeit, I followed you with my eyes as long as I could. I said much to the winds in behalf of a soul so beloved by me, and the ship to which so precious a freight had been entrusted I commended to their care. As they are not without love of fair things, they promised me a happy voyage for you, and a happy return, and as they are honest gods, it cannot be that they will be faithless to their promise; but do you, even as you said prayers to them when parting, pray to them also when you are about to return. For then they will be more favourable to you.

it was a sort of Round Table of erudite men. Its buildings were situated in the royal quarter of the city, adjoining the palace, and included cloisters, gardens, and a common hall for meals. . . . The great Library in the middle of the first century B. C. is said to have contained 700,000 volumes. The librarians of this library—Zenodotus, Eratosthenes, Aristophanes of Byzantium, Aristarchus, and probably Callimachus, and Apollonius of Rhodes—are famous in the annals of classical scholarship.'—J. W. H. Walden, *The Universities of Ancient Greece*, p. 49.

55. It is impossible to read this letter without being reminded of Horace's ode to Virgil (i. 3):

Sic te diva potens Cypri.

Synesius, however, seems to have been ignorant of the Latin language.

56

To his Brother

II

You wrong me, divine and precious head. After having inspired a simple soul, and one whose affections are easily won by daily intercourse, with a love of yourself and of his niece, you make a breach between him and yourself, as also between him and his niece. When she was with me, I seemed to have before my eyes a twofold image; in the girl I seemed still to see her uncle. Now all that was dear to me is gone, and I even blame my natural character because of its unmeasured tendency to become subject to unjust treatment. But if philosophy has really any value at all, I shall steel my heart to more manliness, and henceforth you will all see how tough I am, and how unyielding.

57

*Against Andronicus*¹

The malevolent forces in the universe fulfil the designs of Providence, inasmuch as they punish those deserving of punishment, but nevertheless they are abhorred by God and are to be shunned.

‘For I will raise against you’, saith the Lord, ‘a race’² at whose hands you shall suffer even great woes. And yet those very ones though whom He makes war, He declares that He will in turn assail, for when once they had you in their power, they showed you no pity, nor did they treat you with humanity. I cannot recall the exact words of Holy Writ, but I am sure that somewhere in the sacred books God is represented as speaking in this wise.

57. This number is included by Hercher and Petau (Migne) in the letters of Synesius. It has been considered by all scholars to be not a letter, but an address read before the bishop’s congregation. Its inclusion amongst the letters is due to the manuscript arrangement.

¹ ‘Andronicus of Berenice was a man of humble origin, who had bought the prefecture of his native country in defiance of the law; and was, we gather, in office when Synesius first appeared at Ptolemais as bishop. As soon as the new prefect arrived, he began to rule in the most lawless fashion. One of his first acts was to revenge himself on his predecessor Gennadius, a man of very different stamp. It appears that they had taken opposite sides in politics, and, now that Andronicus had become powerful, he was eager to make his power felt’—Crawford, p. 269.

² Jeremiah xxvii (1). 9.

Nor did He merely speak in this wise without giving effect to His word, but in very truth the Babylonian king razed the city of Jerusalem to the ground, and delivered its people into bondage; ¹ furthermore, this very king himself was soon afflicted with madness. And thus it happened that, by the justice of God, that city was made desolate, so that no man would believe that a city had ever stood on the spot.

How, then? Shall any one dare ask God: 'Wherefore dost Thou raise men against the erring, as Thine avengers, and when they have done service to the Divine Will, and have become the executioners of those against whom they are sent, hast Thou visited them with punishment, at the very time when it was meet that they should receive full payment for their service?'

Has He then awakened us to receive an answer to those questions we put to Him?

Inasmuch as the Divine law has been violated here, evils have come upon men; and the forces that make for evil are those which are especially evil, since by the very abundance of their nature they are also potent in action. Since, then, evils have come once for all, the work of Divine wisdom and virtue and power is not only to do good—this is the nature of God, one might say, as it is that of fire to warm, or of light to illuminate—but most of all to accomplish some good and useful end out of the very evils that have been devised by certain persons, and to turn to good uses those which seem to be evil. For this reason it is the part of an adroit wisdom to make use on occasion even of evil. And thus, whenever God is in need of avengers, he employs, at one moment demons who lead hordes of locusts, at another those whose works are pestilences, or perchance a barbarous nation, or again a wicked ruler, and, in a word, the natures fitted to commit public harm. Nevertheless, He hates those very natures, because they are suitable for this purpose. For God did not make instruments of calamity, but He readily made use of those appointed by themselves to that end.

The very fact that you have become useful in such a direction,

¹ 2 Kings xxiv and xxv.

is precisely that which cuts you off from God. In the same way is one vessel unworthy and another worthy, and is so esteemed to be,¹ for each one is judged according to the use for which it is provided. A table is a sacred thing, for therein is honoured the God of friendship and hospitality. Love of the stranger made Abraham God's host.² But a whip is an abominable thing, for it is the servant of anger, and one who has once used it is seized with regret. But those who are chastised are cared for by God; nor is this a small matter, to be found worthy of God's oversight and to be purified of our sins through retribution.

Vengeful natures, however, are altogether turned away from God. For that which is destructive is of course inimical to that which is creative. Nor is this the avenger's state of mind, whether demon or man, that he is in this contributing some service to God, but rather, gratifying the evil of his nature, he seeks to bring disasters on all and sundry.

Not, therefore, because the city must needs be ill fated, and because you accomplished this disaster, is it ordained that you should escape retribution. For a defence of this sort Judas himself might have brought forward, on the ground that Christ must needs be crucified to redeem the sins of all. Now it was indeed so ordained, 'But', He says, 'woe to him through whom it cometh. It were good for that man that he had never been born.'³ So then, as far as one can see, the noose was the sequel of his treachery.⁴ But the unseen side no man may understand, for it is not in the understanding of man to compass what might be a punishment for the betrayer of Christ.

Truly it is not a clever line of defence to plead that one has only served a destiny in the way in which it was bound to be accomplished. It is accordingly of the first necessity that the Ausurians and Andronicus should suffer a well-merited punishment for the evils which they have done us.

For behold the locust which has destroyed our fruits, which has

¹ 2 Timothy ii. 20.

² Genesis xviii. 8.

³ S. Matt. xxvi. 24; xviii. 7.

⁴ S. Matt. xxvii. 3-5.

eaten the crops to the stalk, and stripped the trees to the bark : against him has risen a wind sweeping headlong to the sea, and has scattered him in the midst of the waves. And as against this pestilence God has arrayed the south wind, so now has a leader been chosen by Him against the Ausurians. Oh, may it prove that he is the holiest and most just of all His generals !

May it be granted to me to acclaim him in the glory of a triumph over these ! 'Happy', it is said, 'he that shall requite them for their ill deeds. Happy he that shall dash their infants against the rock.'¹ What destruction, then, shall await Andronicus, the pest of the district ? What retribution could be worthy of a soul that works evil only ? In my own case, Andronicus is a far heavier ill than all the blows wherewith God has visited us for my sins, for in addition to our common sufferings, this man is my own personal evil. Through him the tempter is at work to get me to desert the service of the altar. But I must take up my discourse a little farther back, so as to add to what you already know what is not known to all of you, and thus give you an orderly account of my affairs ; for in view of what is to follow, it is well for me that you should have heard this from me.

From childhood leisure and comfort in life have ever appeared to me a divine blessing which some one has said befits divine natures ; and this is naught else but the culture of the intellect, and its reconciliation with God on the part of the man who possesses that leisure and profits by it. For the things that concern children or come into their lives in childhood, I felt but the smallest interest, as also for the affairs of youth and early manhood. And when I came to man's estate, I had changed in nothing from my boyhood's love of a quiet life, but, passing my days as if in a sacred festival, I strove throughout all my life to preserve a state of spirit gentle and untroubled by storms.

But, nevertheless, God has not made me useless to men, inasmuch

¹ Psalm cxxxvii. 8 : O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed ; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. 9. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

as oftentimes both cities and private individuals made use of my services in time of need. For God gave me the power to do the utmost and to will the fairest. None of these services drew me apart from philosophy, nor cut short my happy leisure. For to accomplish with struggle and pain, and even then scarcely to accomplish at all, all this wastes time and imbues the spirit with material cares. But he whom speech alone becomes, and persuasion attends upon his utterance, and his speech prevails with his audience, why should such an one be sparing in his words, when thereby another might be freed from his evil plight?

Man is an animal to be prized; to be prized indeed, since for his sake Christ was stretched on the Cross.

Until the present year it was my divine lot to carry persuasion to men; and, however lightly handling affairs, perchance to gain success in them. But now the whole matter seems to have turned to nothing, with many things which clearly came from God. My success, too, I always ascribed to Him, and I lived with good hopes as in a sacred enclosure, the universe, an animal ranging at will in freedom, apportioning my life between prayer, books, and the chase. For that the soul and body may be in health, it is necessary to do some work on the one hand, and on the other to make supplication to God. With such peace in life, I spent the years up to the taking over of the priesthood, for which office I had very little courage in comparison with those that have lived before me. I call to witness the God who rules over all, and whose hidden mysteries I have espoused for your sakes, that away from human preoccupations and ambitions I have come alone to Him in many places and at many times. Prostrate and upon my knees, I have in suppliant guise prayed for death rather than the priesthood. For a certain reverence and love for the leisure I had found in philosophy held me to her, in whose behalf I thought I ought to do and say all things. But although I overbore men I was myself overcome by God. And as it is the common tradition that he who is judged worthy of this office becomes the intimate of God himself, I took it over, but bore with great unwillingness the

change in my life. Fain as I was to take refuge in flight, the hope of good things to come, and the fear of worse, checked me. Then, again, I listened to certain aged saints who averred that God was acting as my shepherd, and one of these said in conversation that the Holy Spirit is joyful, and fills with joy those who receive Him; adding that demons disputed the possession of me with God, and that I am wounding them by espousing the better side. 'But even if they cause you some trouble,' he said, 'none the less the philosopher priest is not neglected by God.' I, then, for I am not easily puffed up with pride, or prone to pleading my own cause brilliantly, blamed only my own ill fortune, nor ascribed aught to an envious demon. I do not think I have sufficient virtue in me to stir up the evil powers. Rather did I fear that being myself a sinner, I should unworthily handle the mysteries of God. My soul was prophetic of the misfortune into which I speedily slipped. Nay, no sooner was I here than all horrors were here, and the chorus leader of them all was Andronicus, a demon of war, gorged with disasters, gloating over the ruins of the city. Alas, everywhere in the market-place the groaning of men, the wailing of women, the lamentations of children! He invested the city with the semblance of one taken by storm. He cut off the fairest part of it, and was responsible for its new name, 'The Place of Vengeance', making the royal colonnade, of old the court of justice, into a place of execution.

He offered all this as an altar and a communion table for the demons¹ of vengeance in whose number he had enrolled himself. Alas, with how many tears of the citizens has he feasted them!

What Tauroscythians,² what Lacedaemonians ever honoured their own Artemis³ on such a scale with the blood that ran from their

¹ Cf. 1 Cor. x. 21.

² Herodotus mentions the Ταῦροι and Σκύθαι—iv. 3.

³ Pausanias, iii. 16. 6: Τὸ δὲ χάριον τὸ ὀνομαζόμενον Λιμναῖον Ὀρθίας ἱερὸν ἔστιν Ἀρτέμιδος . . . ἀπὸ δὲ αὐτῆς καὶ ἐς φόνους προήχθησαν, ἀποθανόντων δ' ἐπὶ τῷ βωμῷ πολλῶν, νύσος ἔφθειρε τοὺς λοιποὺς κτλ.

scourgings? At once every one rushed to me ; from all sides I was pressed to hear and to see atrocities. When I admonished Andronicus, I failed to convince him, when I upbraided him, I only irritated him. The crisis which had now arisen exposed our weakness, which until this moment God had concealed from men, for as I had always enjoyed the credit for all that had prospered, my fellow citizens got the idea that I was a man of power. And this is the most bitter of the misfortunes that have befallen me ; I am condemned in the light of the hope of me felt by those to whom I have been a stranger. For I do not succeed in persuading them that I have not the power they ascribe to me ; rather do they insist on my potency to gain all just ends. All that remains to me, therefore, is grief and shame. Then, suddenly I suffer in my soul, and my cares are complex. There are images of material things before me, and God is far distant.

If all that happened through Andronicus may be taken as signifying the attacks of demons, in that case they did all they desired. No longer did I enjoy the erstwhile sweetness of spirit in my prayers. Only the forms of prayer were there, while I was swept about on all sides of these affairs of mine, distracted by anger, grief, and all kinds of suffering.

Yet it is through the intellect that we have communion with God, whereas the tongue purveys to men the things which concern man. Accordingly, if I have had the misfortune to be inattentive in my prayers, the result makes that obvious. For when my life was changed, not only in this way did I have the benefit of the change and encounter evil, to wit by turning to practical matters through neglect of prayer, but behold, I, who till the other day had lived untouched by grief, saw lying dead one who, I had prayed, might outlive me. So bitter is the reception with which the city has welcomed me. In this way do the affairs of men move, at one moment upward, at another downward ; and the tide sets in, carrying many things heaped together, at one moment the lucky, at another the unlucky. But in my own case, when it befell me to lose the dearest of sons, I was sore tempted to inflict an awful blow upon

myself. To such an extent was I overcome by grief. Face to face with other things, I am a *man*, I say this before those who well know it, and for the most part I obey the dictates of reason, but I am so overcome by affection that unreason gets the upper hand over reason. Therefore not by the tenets of philosophy have I overcome my present trouble; it is Andronicus who has been the driving force. It is he who has made me keep my mind upon the misfortunes I share with others. Troubles have come to me which are the antidotes of my own troubles, drawing me to themselves, and driving out suffering with suffering.

Along with the bitter consciousness of present misfortunes there comes to me the memory of the great blessings of the past, out of what experiences I have come into my present circumstances, and in a word, how I live unhappily deprived of everything at once. The greatest of the evils afflicting me, and one which makes my life a difficult one to find hope in, is that whereas aforesaid I was accustomed to be never without a response in my prayers to God, now for the first time I know that I have prayed in vain. Then, too, I see that my house is faring evilly, and I am forced to dwell in my ill-fated native town. Exposed to all, one to whom they come for sympathy, and to lament, each one over his own sorrows, I can now only offer these a useless pity. Furthermore, I am ashamed of the case of a citizen who is in misfortune, and has had public money stolen from him, and lo! comes Andronicus, reclaiming more than ten thousand staters, even deciding to kill him, without granting a respite, on account of the one thousand still due, or rather on my account. Yes, on my account, he keeps him guarded in an impregnable fortress in the like of which the children of the poets represent the Titans as enchained.¹ In order that he may not be taken away by me, so he says, he has given orders that the man shall not

¹ *Iliad*, viii. 479:

ἔν' Ἰαπετός τε Κρόνος τε
 ἤμενοι οὐτ' αὐγῆσ' Ὑπερίονος Ἡελίοιο
 τέρποντ' οὐτ' ἀνέμοισι, βαθὺς δέ τε Τάρταρος ἀμφί.

'And for thine anger reckon I not, not even though thou go to the nethermost bounds of

have food brought to him for five days, all entrance of bread having been forbidden to the jailers. But only the other day every one heard him loudly declare that the citizen's death would be worth more to him than the thousand staters. Again, when men come about him to purchase the estates, he proceeds to terrorize them, to throw them into confusion, and he drives them away by any means whatsoever. For of the money, as I think, he has no need; rather stands he in need of this man's death. Now I am not strong enough to attack walls so solid, nor sufficiently adroit to enter into his cell by stealth, and rescue him from his plight.

Nor, some say, do they permit any one to enter there. For his servants are by nature such as they are, but now they are living after the pattern of Andronicus, who governs to the dishonour of the Church.

I do not trouble about the extent of the forces he has combined against me; nay, I should even be grateful to him if I were to receive a dishonour at his hands, for so long as it were in the service of God, I should regard it as of the nature of martyrdom. For remember who he was, as compared with me. Indeed, if nothing else, I am descended from those men whose lineage, beginning with that Eurysthenes who settled the Dorians in Sparta, and going down to my own father, has been engraved on the public monuments, whereas this fellow cannot tell the name of his own grandfather, nor even of his father, except by guess, and from a tunny fisher's perch on a crag he has come at a bound into the governor's chariot.

Let him stand in awe, therefore, of the light which shines in the city, and be ashamed of his defects. As for myself, up to the time when I took priest's orders, I was loaded with honour, and dishonour I never tasted. But now I cannot rejoice in honour, nor do I grieve if slighted, for neither of these things appears

earth and sea, where sit Iapetos and Kronos and have no joy in the beams of Hyperion the Sun-god, neither in any breeze, but deep Tartaros is round about them.'

—Lang, Leaf, and Myers.

any longer to have been brought upon me by their author, but both must be referred to God himself. Wherefore this all-daring fellow, when he can disturb me in no wise either by speaking or acting, breaks away from me to butt against God himself, and to this end raises his voice publicly before people herded and assembled together. You shall hear his words presently, when the letter is read to all the churches throughout the world.

Such is the nature that has remained without education, once it has acquired power. It strives to shatter heaven with its head. So be it, then, let him rule; let him give rein to his nature; to his opportunity; let him kill and bind whomsoever of the citizens he pleases. But for us it is enough to remain in the rank wherein God has placed us, to be separated from the fellowship of the evil, 'to keep our ears pure from grievous evil-speaking', and despair of the cause of the unjustly treated. And our defence before you and the people will be that we have tried in vain. No doubt it became one who had any greatness in him, to act thus even before this experience had come to him. But I have waited to make you convinced with me, by the logic of facts, that to join together political ability with the priesthood is to combine the incompatible.

The past ages made the same men priests and judges. The Egyptians and the Hebrew nation were for long ruled over by their priests. Then, later, it seems to me, when the Divine work was executed in a humane spirit, God separated the two ways of life. One of these was appointed to the priestly, and the other to the governing order. Some He turned over to matter, and others He associated with Himself. And so some have been marshalled for practical affairs, but we to remain in our life of prayer. From each class God asks that which is fair, and just. Why then do you move backwards, why do you seek to fit together those things which have been separated by God,¹ you who demand not that we should govern, but that we should govern badly? Nothing could be more

¹ Cf. S. Matt. xix. 6.

unfortunate than this. Do you need a protector? Walk to the administrator¹ of the laws of the state. Do you want anything of God? Go to the priest of the city,—not that you shall always find there what you seek, though for my part I shall do my utmost. And if any one is disposed to leave me tranquillity, perchance I shall have the power, some day; for at the same moment does one turn away from matter and towards God.

Contemplation is the end and aim of the priesthood, if it does not belie its name. But contemplation and action do not deign to mingle.² For impulse is the beginning of all action, and no impulse is free from passion; whereas the soul that is to receive God must be free from passion. For it is not lawful, He says, that the man who is not pure should handle that which is pure. 'Be still and learn that I am God.'³ He has need of leisure, who is a bishop and a philosopher. I do not condemn bishops who are occupied with practical matters, for knowing of myself that I am hardly equal to one of the two things, I admire all the more those who are competent in both fields.

Power to serve two masters⁴ is not in me. Nevertheless, if there are some who are not injured even by a condescension, they would be able both to be bishops, and to conduct the affairs of cities. A sunbeam, even if it consorts with mud, remains pure and undefiled.

¹ ἐπιτροπεύειν, strictly used, refers to the duties of a *procurator* (ἐπίτροπος), not to those of a *praefectus* (ἐπαρχος).

² The doctrine here expressed is not that of the Neo-Platonists, at least if we may take Plotinus as their mouthpiece. 'Reason assists and presides over action, and in consequence is not itself action. Since then it is not action, it must be contemplation. . . . Nature is only the image of a higher contemplation. For this reason that which it produces is altogether weak, because a weak contemplation engenders a weak object. So there are men who are too feeble for contemplation, and who find in action a shadow of contemplation and reason. Being unable to raise themselves to contemplation from the weakness of their souls, unable to behold spiritual reality and fill themselves with it, but desiring to see it, they are driven to action, that they may see that which they could not see with the spiritual eye.'—Dr. Inge, translation, Plotinus, *Enneads*, iii. 8. For the Neo-Platonist, contemplation was the highest form of action—i. e. creation—and included true action in its sphere.

³ Psalm xlv (xlvj). II.

⁴ S. Matt. vi. 24.

But I, in like case, should need springs and the sea itself to cleanse me. If it was possible for an angel to live more than thirty years among men, and to absorb no evil from matter for enjoyment, of what use was it that the Son of God should come down to us? It is the acme of power to mix with the inferior, and at the same time to remain steadfast in our true nature, and in no way to represent passion. This is worthy of praise in God, but it is a course to be shunned by man, who must be on his guard against the weakness of his own nature.

According to these principles shall I pass my life with you. Nevertheless, I reserve to myself the right of judging when times and seasons are opportune, so that when it is possible I may come down, that I may do some great good when the chance arises. Thus does God Himself govern His own kingdom.

But absorption is the terrible thing; for this evil the Divine Nature does not admit of, nor does any man who regulates his life according to the Divine Example. If I become absorbed in my money and my possessions, if you become aware that I am for ever receiving accounts of my expenses by the day and by the year, and at the same time that I am grudging in the measure of time I give to your affairs—in that case I am an impostor and deserve no forgiveness. But if, on the other hand, I have neglected my domestic affairs, the better to cultivate the activities of the intellect, is it so surprising if I ask you to do the same? But since we do not please you with these opinions, and inasmuch as there are others who are able to serve equally well in both fields, it is always in your power to decide the best course for the city, for the churches, and for me. The priesthood I shall not decline. May the power of Andronicus never go as far as that!

But just as when a philosopher I sought not the public, nor courted the applause of the theatre, nor even opened a lecture room—and yet I was in very truth, and may I ever be, a philosopher—so now I have no desire to be a popular bishop.¹

¹ Charles Péguy, quoted by Dr. Inge, vol. ii, p. 181, says: 'Ce sont les mystiques qui sont même pratiques et ce sont les politiques qui ne le sont pas. . . . C'est nous

All men cannot do all things.¹ Living by myself and communing with God through my reason, when I descend from the realms of contemplation, I can hold useful converse with one or two at a time, and these must not belong to the crowd, but be such as, either by the character they have been allotted, or the education they have been blessed with, admire the soul rather than the body. By so handling affairs at long intervals and at my own leisure, I might be useful at an opportune moment. On the other hand, when I am overwhelmed by these things, I am forgetful of myself, and only injure the success of the business I am engaged in. For it is not possible to do anything well if one hates it. The man who is carrying out what is not the resolution of his best judgement, goes disheartened to that which needs his personal supervision. But the man who is unsuited for leisure, and who when leisure comes cannot in any way profit by it, who is the very last word in the way of a public servant, a spacious spirit adequate to the cares of all, and who, since it is his nature, is willing to act, that man will assuredly be grateful to the circumstances which draw him nearer to them, for they furnish material for his very nature. The greatest aid to success is the love for the thing itself. Therefore you must all choose the most useful man in place of us, who can with difficulty save ourselves.

Why do you protest? Is it because this has never yet taken place, that it should be thought that it cannot even now take place? Many necessary things has time found and righted, nor do all things happen according to a pattern, and of those which have happened, each one had a beginning, and, before it came into existence, was not yet. Usefulness is more deserving of preference than

[les mystiques] qui faisons les œuvres et les hommes, les peuples et les races. Et c'est eux [les politiques] qui les ruinent.' But Synesius was not a mystic. For him, as in this passage, contemplation and action were eternally divorced. This, it seems to me, was the crux of his philosophy, and the tragedy of his life was the struggle between two opposing forces which the doctrines of Plotinus might have enabled him to unify. But whatever his railings against his destiny, so far as the life is apparent to us, the man of action was always the man who ruled in the end.

¹ Cf. Verg. *Ecl.* viii. 63: non omnia possumus omnes.

custom. Let us start the best custom on its way. Let the man be chosen to succeed us, or chosen to act with us, but by all means let him be chosen. Whoever he be, he will appear far wiser than I, so far as politics are concerned, and he will be able to conciliate and manage those miserable wretches for your sakes.

Now, if this does not yet seem good to you, let us postpone the matter to a later date. For one may take up this matter both individually and in common. Now in what terms the council has attacked Andronicus' madness, listen.

58

To the Bishops

Andronicus of Berenice¹ let no man call a Christian—for he was born, nurtured, and grew up for the evil destiny of Pentapolis, having bought the rule of his country for his own—but rather as accursed of God, let him with his whole household be turned out of every church.²

The reason for this is, not that he has been the deadliest plague of Pentapolis, after an earthquake, an invasion of locusts, a pestilence, a conflagration, a war; not that he methodically sought out the remaining victims of these disasters and introduced horrible kinds and fashions of punishment for the first time into the country (and would that I could say that he alone has made use of them). Not because of his instruments of torture to which I allude, that crush the fingers and feet, compress limbs, tweak the nose, and deform

58. This letter, like the former, is a public address, an epilogue to the last, and also an encyclical document intended to be sent abroad to the other sees. It was revoked at the last moment. See Introduction.

¹ The Berenice here referred to is no doubt the western town of the Cyrenean Pentapolis (see Pauly-Wissowa, iii. 282, no. 8). Beronice, the form suggested by the manuscripts here, is also found elsewhere.

² Synesius 'commuted the sentence from what was called the greater excommunication, which involved entire exclusion from the churches, to the lesser, which excluded from the Communion, but not from the *Missa Catechumenorum*. At the same time, he warned the offender that a relapse into his previous courses would be immediately followed by the issue of the encyclical letter already drawn up against him,'—Alice Gardner, p. 155.

the ears and lips, of which things those who had forestalled the experience and the sight by perishing in the war, were adjudged happy by such as had by ill fate survived. The reason for this condemnation is, that first amongst us, and alone of our number, he blasphemed Christ both in word and deed. In deed, for that he nailed upon the door of the church edicts of his own, in the which he denied to those whom he had ill-used the right of sanctuary at the inviolate table, threatening the priests of God with such things as even Phalaris¹ the Agrigentine, and Cephren the Egyptian², and Sennacherib³ the Babylonian would have feared to menace, though the last of these sent envoys to Jerusalem to insult Hezekiah and God Himself. I say that on that day he brought about the second crucifixion of our Lord, for that abusive notice was suspended from the sacred door with purpose to insult Christ Himself. And this the sun looked down upon, and men read it aloud. No Tiberius Claudius was administering the State, by whom Pilate was sent to govern the Jews, but the sacred race of Theodosius was holding the sceptre of the Romans, from which Andronicus had filched the ruling power for himself, animated by the same spirit as Pilate. Those written words were a matter for laughter to the unbelieving passers by, just as that which was written upon the Cross of Christ was to the Jews. And yet the inscription on the Cross, although proceeding from an impious mind, was at all events serious in its wording, since by it Christ was proclaimed 'King'. In this case, however, the tongue was in accord with the mind. But as to those things which followed after, they were even graver than those first placarded. For when he had found some pretext for proceeding against an enemy (there was indeed an enmity between them because the one was desirous of a marriage which the other

¹ Pindar, *Pythians*, i. 95 :

τὸν δὲ ταύρῳ χαλκῷ καντῆρα νηλέα νόον
ἐχθρὰ Φάλαριν κατέχει παντὶ φάτις.

'Phalaris, ruthless in spirit, who burned his victims in his brazen bull, is whelmed forever by a hateful infamy.'—Sandys.

² Βασιλεύσαι δὲ ἔλεγον Χερφῆρα ἕξ καὶ πεντήκοντα ἔττα . . . ἐν τοῖσι Αἰγυπτίοισι τε πᾶσαν εἶναι κακότητα.—Herodotus, ii. 127 ff.

³ 2 Kings xviii. 13 sqq.

forbade), he sought to maltreat him with those unnatural tortures of his. May these never be handed down by the passage of time, but, as they began with Andronicus, so may they disappear with him, and may these symbols of this man's rule survive to our posterity as a mere rumour.

Now when a man of good birth, not an unjust one, but a man who has been unfortunate only, was tortured by these means, and that too in the full midday sun, that he might die with executioners only for witnesses, and when Andronicus became aware that the Church was in sympathy with this man—only because, the moment I heard of the facts, I myself rushed out, as I was, that I might be on the spot and share in bearing the trouble—when he hears of this, he flies into a rage that a bishop has dared to pity a man hated by himself. Then he indulges in all sorts of violent behaviour, the boldest of his servants, Thoas, encouraging him, the tool he employs for his public outrages, and finally he lets out in madness that most godless voice of his, saying that he has placed his hopes in the Church in vain, and that no one shall be torn from the hands of Andronicus, not even should he be embracing the foot of Christ Himself.

This speech he shouted out thrice with his untrained mind and voice. After this it is useless to admonish the fellow; but as an unhealthy member of the body, he should be cut off from us, in order that the healthy part be not also destroyed through the contagion; for defilement is infectious, and he that has touched the accursed shares in the guilt.

We must be, both in mind and in body, pure before God. For these reasons the church of Ptolemaïs enjoins her sister churches everywhere in these terms:

Let the precincts of no house of God be open to Andronicus and his associates, or to Thoas and his associates. Let every holy sanctuary and enclosure be shut in their faces. There is no part in Paradise for the Devil: even if he has secretly crept in, he is cast out. I exhort, therefore, every private individual and ruler not to be under the same roof with them, nor to be seated at the same table,

particularly priests, for these shall neither speak to them while living, nor join in their funeral processions, when dead. Furthermore, if any one shall flout the authority of this church on the ground that it represents a small town only, and shall receive those who have been excommunicated by it, for that he need not obey that which is without wealth, let such a one know that he is creating a schism in the Church which Christ wishes to be one. Such a man, whether he be deacon, presbyter, or bishop, shall share the fate of Andronicus at our hands, and neither shall we give him our right hand, nor ever eat at the same table with him, and far be it from us to hold communion in the holy mysteries with those desiring to take part with Andronicus and Thoas.

59

To Anysius

148

The man to whom I have entrusted this letter is at heart a philosopher, but by profession a pleader¹ at the bar. As long as Anysius was with us, and as long as Pentapolis existed², he continued to practise this profession in our country. The times since your departure have betrayed us to our enemies, and have brought a spell of tranquillity in the law courts; so he has made up his mind to sail to another law court where a venal tongue, the pleader's stock-in-trade, makes the pleader known. Try to win for him the friendliness of a provincial governor. I call to witness the divinity who presides over our friendship, that any one to whom you recommend him will be grateful to you, when he returns after making trial of him.

60

*To Auxentius*³

114

If I were to accuse you of being false to friendship, I should win my case before the tribunal of God and of all godlike men, for how

¹ Nothing is known of the pleader in question.

² From this phrase one may gather that the letter was written after the devastations of the barbarians which followed on the recall of Anysius. Druon's date is 412.

³ Auxentius was apparently an early friend of Synesius when a child in Cyrene.

did I become involved in your quarrel with my brother? Without my approval he took the side of Phaus, of blessed memory, against Sabbatius. You failed to persuade him by what you said on that occasion; you then turned your wrath against me, and did me as much harm as you could. I accepted your declaration of war, for at that moment it was permissible. To-day it is not permissible, nor do I desire to continue it. The advance of years in its bounty stifles the spirit of contention in me, and holy laws, they say, forbid it.

Then again, I well remember how we were brought up and educated together, and how we consorted in Cyrene, things which we ought to hold stronger than these quarrels over Sabbatius. Make a cult, then, of friendship, that excellent thing, and receive my greetings. I account the time of my silence as my punishment. Do you not think that I was wounded at the time I allude to? Yet I persisted in my silence. Such is the evil of lasting enmity.

61

To Pylaemenes

21

I had a large Egyptian rug, not such as one could put below a bedspread, but one which might be used by itself as a bedspread. Asterius, the shorthand writer, saw it, and asked me for it, at the time when I was obliged to sleep in front of the Record Office. I promised to leave it to him as a present when I should go away, but naturally I could not gratify him in such a manner, exposed as I was to the Thracian snow. Now I am sending it off to him, for I did not leave it behind at that time. Would you be so kind as to give it to him for me, with an apology to the truth of which you yourself shall be witness, if you remember the circumstances under

‘He took the opposite side to Euoptius on some political question,’ says Crawford (p. 379), ‘and though Synesius did not sympathise with his brother’s course of action, turned his wrath upon the philosopher . . . a breach between the two friends was the result. The quarrel may have lasted some time; but a man of Synesius’ type could not allow it to continue indefinitely . . . he wrote two letters to Auxentius to ask him to let bygones be bygones.’ The other is Letter 116.

which I left the town. God shook the earth¹ repeatedly during the day, and most men were on their faces in prayer: for the ground was shaking. As I thought at that time that the open sea would be safer than the land, I rushed straight to the harbour without speaking to any one except Photius of blessed memory, but I was content simply to shout to him from afar, and to make signs with my hand that I was going away. He who departed without saying good-bye to Aurelian, his dear friend and a consul, has certainly excused himself for having behaved in the same way to Asterius, an attendant.

That is how it all happened, and though since my departure this vessel has been sent on her third voyage to Thracian parts, yet it is the first time that she is being sent by me. So I am now paying my debt through you on the first possible occasion. Be so kind as to find out this man for me. I first tell you his name and occupation, but you must have some further indications, as perchance there may be some one else with this same name and calling. All points are seldom found in one person, nor would a man be at once a Syrian by race, dark in colour, aquiline in features, and medium in height. He dwells near the royal palace, not that palace which belongs to the state, but the one behind it which formerly belonged to Ablabius, and which now belongs to Placidia, the sister of our Emperors. If Asterius has changed his dwelling-place, for that is possible, you have only to seek Marcus. He is a well-known person, one of the Prefect's cohort. He was at that time at the very head of the company of shorthand writers of which Asterius was a member, and through his good offices you could find out this company. Asterius was not the last, but amongst the first few, the third or the fourth; possibly now he is the first.

You will give him this thick rug, and say to him what we have said to you concerning the delay. And you may also, if you wish, read the letter itself to him, for military duties do not leave us time to write to him too; but nothing, I suppose, prevents us from being just. May weapons of war never have such power as that!

¹ For the probable date of this earthquake see Introduction.

Praise is the reward of virtue, which we offer to the most illustrious¹ Marcellinus at this moment when he is leaving his post, at this moment when suspicion of every flattery is in abeyance. When he arrived here, he found our cities attacked from without by the multitude and rage of the barbarians, from within by the lack of discipline of the troops and the rapacity of their commanders. Marcellinus appeared in our midst as a god. He vanquished the enemy in a single day's fighting, and by his continual alertness he has brought our subjects into line. He has thus out of both calamities brought peace to our cities. Nor did he claim any of those profits that usage has made to appear lawful; he has not plotted to despoil the rich or ill-treat the poor. He has shown himself pious towards God, just towards his fellow citizens, considerate to suppliants. On this account a philosopher priest² is not ashamed to praise him, a priest from whom no one ever received a testimonial bought by favour. We wish that the courts of law also were present with us, so that, collectively and individually, all we inhabitants of Ptolemaïs might have presented him in return with such a testimonial as is in our power, however inadequate, for words are somehow far inferior to deeds. I would most willingly have made a speech on the occasion in behalf of us all.

But since to-day he is beyond the frontier, we wish at all events to dedicate to him our testimony in the form of a letter, not as those from whom a favour is solicited, but as those who have solicited one.

62. This seems to be one of the last letters that Synesius wrote. Drüon fixes the date in the year 413. The heading should perhaps be rendered 'To the governor'.

¹ ἀνὴρ λαμπρότατος is the official Greek equivalent for *uir clarissimus*, indicating a man of senatorial rank.

² This phrase occurs also in the indictment of Andronicus—'The philosopher priest will always be dear to God'.

63 *To Joannes* 89

One should use the friendship of the great, not abuse it.

64 *To Joannes* 90

Do not ask great things, for you run two dangers; if successful you wound, and if unsuccessful you are wounded.

65 *To his Brother* 43

I am sending you both the Dionysii,¹ so that you may keep one of these books and take back the other.

66 *To Theophilus* 122

As I am about to make a certain inquiry of you, I wish first to give you some explanation in regard to it. A man from Cyrene, Alexander by name, of senatorial rank, while still quite young entered the monastic life. As his plan of life developed with his years, he was deemed worthy of ecclesiastical orders. He first became a deacon and then a priest. Then certain matters called him to court, and he became associated with Joannes² of blessed memory; I use the phrase advisedly, for we cannot speak without respect of that man, now that he is no more; all enmity ought to end with this life.

Associated with this prelate before the churches were thrown into confusion, he was ordained at his hands Bishop of Basinupolis in Bithynia, and when differences arose he remained the friend of his

63. Compare Letter 2. This letter and the one following seem to be addressed to the Joannes of Letter 44.

¹ Lapatz (p. 289) thinks that Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Aelius Dionysius of the same town are referred to.

² Petavius thinks that S. John Chrysostom is alluded to. He was a well-known enemy of Theophilus. As Theophilus died in the year 412, an approximate date may be arrived at as the time when Synesius entered upon his high office.

ordainer, and was of those who took his part. But when the Synod's judgement prevailed against him, for a time the quarrel continued. But why should I tell you all that you know better than any one? Was it not owing to you, after all, that measures were taken to bring about union? I read a memoir full of good sense, which you addressed, if I am not mistaken, to the blessed Atticus, and in which you advised him to receive certain men again. Up to this moment there was common cause between Alexander and his fellow-apostates. But his was a peculiar line of conduct, at least one shared by few, inasmuch as the third year has now come round since the amnesty and the reconciliation, but he has not taken the straight road to Bithynia nor has he taken over the see assigned to him. He remains in our midst, as if he cared not at all whether any one treats him as a layman or not. Now, for my part, I have not been in the past brought up in knowledge of the holy laws, nor has it befallen me to learn much even now, for as recently as last year I was not on the list of bishops.¹ So, when I perceive aged men not even pretending to understand the situation clearly, but terrified lest they should unwittingly offend against some canon of the Church; when I see them treating him quite harshly on this account, and because of their vague distrust slighting the stranger everywhere in public, nor suffering him in their houses; I do not censure these men, but I do not imitate them. Do you know how I conducted myself, most venerable Father? I did not receive Alexander at the church, nor did I permit him to communicate at the sacred table, but in my own house I paid him the same civilities as I extend to the blameless, and my manner to him is such as it is to my fellow countrymen.

When any one of these comes to pay us a visit, in every act and word conveying honour, we defer to him, esteeming as nonsense any disgust that people may feel, at our subversion of the metropolitan rights of the city. And yet on account of this I bear the cares of all, taking them on my shoulders, and, for the sake of the leisure

¹ We learn from this sentence that the letter was written in the first year of Synesius' occupancy of the see of Ptolemaïs.

of all, I alone have no leisure ; but it will be put down to my honour in the sight of God, that though poor in honours I am rich in labours. Whenever I set out for church, I do not like to see this Alexander anywhere in the forum, and if by any chance I see him, I turn my eyes elsewhere, and a blush at once spreads over my cheek. But the moment he has crossed the threshold of my house, that he is under my roof, I receive him with all the usual courtesies. Why, then, am I at variance with myself in public and private, and in neither of the situations do what seems fitting? At one moment I obey the law, at another I am yielding to my own nature, which inclines me to benevolence : and yet I should have been willing even to do violence to my nature, if I had been clearly informed about the law. This very thing, then, is the question to which the authority of the evangelical succession ought to give an answer simply and clearly, and as I understand it—Is Alexander to be considered a bishop or not?

67

To Theophilus

123

I desire, and a divine necessity also urges me, to consider as law all that your sacred throne ordains. On this account, I have declined a sad duty, I have forced my body to action, while still under medical treatment, and have just journeyed through the suspected region as if it were unsuspected. I have traversed a country infested by the enemy, and have arrived at Palaebisca and Hydrax. These are two villages of Pentapolis on the very frontier of arid Libya. Once there, I called together a meeting of the inhabitants ; I gave them one letter, and I read to them from the other (one of these was addressed to them, the other, concerning them, addressed to me). I then delivered a speech suited to an election, hoping to induce them to propose the resolution concerning a bishop, or, if the case demanded it, to force them to such a decision ; but I could not overcome this people's devotion to the most holy¹ Paul. Believe

67. This letter seems to have been written not long after the preceding, as Druon points out.

¹ This word *εὐλαβέστατος* is sometimes a quasi-official epithet applied to deacons, virgins, etc. ; cf. Sir W. M. Ramsay, *Luke the Physician* (London, 1908), pp. 398 f.

me, my Father, it was no wish of mine to set out upon this quick and useless journey. I have only offended a people who held me in great honour.

Amongst the most prominent citizens some protested with exclamations of wrath, while others, mounting upon any available pedestal the better to be heard, addressed themselves at length to the gathering. I at once accused these of bribery and conspiracy, and ordered the ushers to hustle and to expel them from the meeting. I restrained and pacified the turbulent excitement of the crowd. I went through every path of argument; I invoked the sanctity of the Primate's throne, seeking to convince them that slight or honour to you means slight or honour to God. After this their lips pronounced the name of your sacred person with respect. They knelt down, they called upon you with cries and with groans, even as though you had been present. The emotion of these men, even though it was greater than I expected, was slight, but the women, who are proverbially difficult to control, lifted their arms, they raised their infants towards Heaven, they closed their eyes that they might not see the bishop's seat bereft of its accustomed occupant. Indeed, in spite of our policy being the very opposite, they almost compelled us to the same state of feeling. I feared that I should not have the power to resist the contagion, for I felt my inner emotions mastering me; so I dissolved the meeting, and announced that it should assemble again on the fourth day, not, however, without first pronouncing vengeful execrations upon any who by their venal conduct and from motives of purely personal interest, by their complacent attitude or from any other private motive, should use language in opposition to the will of the Church.

The appointed day arrived, and the people were again there, hostile and contentious. They did not even wait for a discussion, but straightway all was in an uproar, a confused sound impossible to distinguish. At this moment the heralds of the church proclaimed silence. Their clamour then ended in a dirge, and there was a sullen sound of men groaning, of women wailing, and of children sobbing. One said he mourned a father, another a son, another a brother;

each one according to his age divided the titles of relationship. I was just about to speak, when a petition was passed up to me from the midst of the crowd. This some one begged me to read before the assembly. It was an adjuration to me not to attempt to restrain their violence any longer, but to postpone my decision until they were enabled to send to your most blessed presence a decree touching the matter, and an ambassador. They even begged me to send to you a written statement in their behalf, explaining all that I had learned here.

Now it was proclaimed in the Synod by the priests and publicly by the people, and the missive went through these very points in order, that these churches belonged to that of Erythrum, according to the Apostolic and patriarchal tradition, but split away under Orion of blessed memory, then in advanced old age and blamed for weakness of character.

This has always been a reproach in the eyes of those who consider that the priesthood should be a champion of men's affairs, and versatile in its functions. So when he continued to live on, they could not bring themselves to wait for the death of the righteous man, but put forward Siderius of blessed memory for election, for he seemed to them a man young and energetic. He had served under the Emperor Valens, and had returned from his military career to take over the administration of a domain which he had claimed, a man able to injure his enemies, to be useful to his friends. This was the moment when the influence of heresy was powerful; it had the masses of the people on its side; cleverness, wisdom's tool, found its opportunity. This man and this one alone was appointed Bishop of Palaebisca. But the election was positively unlawful, as I have learned from the older men, inasmuch as he was not duly consecrated either in Alexandria or by three here, even though the power to ordain had been granted there. Philo of blessed memory, they say, took upon himself to announce the election of his fellow-priest entirely upon his own responsibility. This Philo of Cyrene was the elder, the uncle and namesake of the younger. In other respects he was such as Christ's teachings had made him,

but the moment there was a question of authority on the one hand and obedience on the other, he was more audacious than law-abiding. I ask forgiveness from the sacred soul of the old man for such a remark. He (Philo) arrived on the spot, and took the ordaining of the blessed Siderius into his own hands, and placed him upon the bishop's throne.

After all, one must relax the severe letter of the law, in times when freedom of speech is impossible. Even the great Athanasius himself has been known to yield to the force of circumstances ; and some little time after all this, when it was necessary to warm and kindle up the tiny spark of the orthodox faith that still remained in Ptolemaïs, and since Siderius seemed to him fit for so important a mission, he transferred him to this place, that he might govern the metropolitan Church. But old age brought back Siderius to the village churches. There he died, and had no successor in these towns any more than he had had a predecessor. Palaebisca and Hydrax were put under the old arrangement and came back to their dependency upon Erythrum, and this, they say, was in accordance with the decision of your sacred person. Now the citizens are very strong upon one point, to wit : that this consecration of yours should not be annulled. I asked them for the original document signed by you. They were not able to present it to me, but they produced as witnesses bishops from the council. These said that they proposed Paul to the people in obedience to a letter received from you. As it seemed well to all to make him bishop, they reported the decision, and others succeeded in placing him on the throne.

Now, if you will allow me to say so, most revered Father, that was really the moment to look into the matter, for it is more painful to take away a thing than not to grant it ; but let that now prevail which seems best to your paternal authority. For if what then seemed right to you was so to them, and they allege this, the fact that it no longer seems so to you deprives it of any justice in the future. It is only in this way that your will becomes identical with justice in the eyes of the people ; for obedience is life, and disobedience is death. Therefore they do not raise their hands against

you; on the contrary, they supplicate you not to make them orphans while their Father yet lives, for so they declare in their speech.

I hardly know whether I should praise or congratulate the young man on the goodwill all are showing him. For it is (a triumph) either of art and power, or of divine grace, so to win men and so to dominate the multitude that for them life is not worth living without him.

Your kind nature will therefore give the kindlier decision in their case. I must go back to town, there to await your orders to act. But you shall not be in ignorance of my arrangements during the four days that I passed in this place, and what solution each difficulty found. Do not be surprised if I happen to speak well and ill of the same man, for these comments do not all apply to the same actions, and it is acts that are praised or blamed. It were well that discord should never arise between those who are brothers in Christ. But if this does occur, it is well that it should promptly disappear. Moved by all these considerations, as well as in obedience to the instructions you sent, I have undertaken to arbitrate, and I have been listening to a dispute of somewhat the following nature:

In the village of Hydrax there is a spot, itself the loftiest part of the village, which formerly was a highly fortified citadel, but God having visited the spot with an earthquake, it has become an abandoned heap of ruins. Up to this day they have been making other uses of some few of its parts, but these present times of war make it extremely valuable to those who possess it, because it could be fortified anew and return to its old use. Now between our brothers, the most pious¹ bishops, Paul and Dioscurus, as formerly between others, it was a matter of contention. The Darnite had accused the Erythrite of employing fraudulent means of his own in order to get possession of that which did not belong to him. He had, forsooth, consecrated to God the property of another, under the pretext of piety. He

¹ See the note on p. 149. From Boissonade's note on this passage it would appear that Synesius uses the epithet mainly, if not exclusively, of bishops.

then defended his villainy with the strong hand ; he was the first man to occupy it ! The reverend Paul endeavoured to advance some counter-arguments, how that he had annexed the fort beforehand, and it had been used as a church long before the most reverend ¹ Dioscurus had been appointed owner of the site. But if any one were to handle the inquiry firmly, the truth would soon be evident, for this whole allegation seems stale. The fact that a crowd of men have once prayed there by necessity, driven in by a hostile attack of the enemy, does not consecrate the spot, for at that rate all the mountains and all the valleys would be churches, and no fortress would escape being a place of public worship, for in all such places, when the enemy are out for plunder, prayers and celebrations of the Holy Mysteries take place. How many houses in the godless days of the Arians have received prayers and sacred ceremonies ! These houses are none the less private property. For that, too, was a case of flight, and they, too, were enemies. Next I inquired into the date of the consecration, and if it had taken place by the gift or agreement of the proprietors. The opposite appeared clearly to be the case. One of the bishops asked for the fort. The other, who was in possession at the time, refused it. Finally one went out with the keys in his pocket, then the other burst in, and bringing with him a table, therewith consecrated a small room, on a broad hill. But nowhere is there access to this small room, except by crossing the whole of the plateau.

Clearly it had been calculated that by this manœuvre the hill could be definitely acquired. For my own part, this whole performance seemed to me unworthy, more than unworthy, and I was very angry at this flagrant violation of all sacred laws and civil forms of justice alike. All things become confounded, if on the one hand a new form of confiscation is invented, and if on the other by the holiest things the most abominable should be judged, prayer, the table of the Holy Communion, and the Mystic Veil becoming instruments of a violent attack. No doubt it was on these points that judgement had already been given in the city, for as a matter

¹ See note on p. 153.

of fact at Ptolemais a meeting of almost all the bishops of the province had then assembled to consider a question of public interest. As they listened they felt hatred of the proceeding, but they hesitated before an act of eviction. I wish to separate superstition from piety, for it is an evil which has taken on the mask of virtue, an evil which philosophy has discovered to be the third degree of godlessness. In my eyes there is nothing sacred or holy except that which has come into being in justice and holiness. Nor did it occur to me to shudder at the alleged consecration. For it is not the doctrine of Christians that the Divine presence follows of necessity these mystical matters and sounds, as though these were certain physical attractions. An earthly spirit might be so moved, indeed, but rather is the Divine present with unperturbed dispositions, and those that are proper to God. How could the Holy Ghost descend into a heart where anger, unreasoning passion, and a contentious spirit are the ruling forces? Nay, if such passions as these enter, even if it has formerly dwelt therein, it takes its departure. I was just about to declare the transference, but he was then proved to have promised this earlier himself, and had clenched his promise by an oath.

Accordingly, taking this up with satisfaction, I was already for withdrawing from pronouncing sentence, but declaring the man himself his own judge, and compelling him to keep his oath. But when he tried to retract and delayed, as I happened to be on the spot because of the ecclesiastical inspection, I felt called upon to cast an eye on the site, and to consider anew the subject under discussion; and again there was present a gathering of bishops from the neighbourhood collected for one reason or another. In the presence of all these, and in my own, the boundary stones were shown marking out clearly the territory of Darnis; and the testimony of the old men, and the admissions of those who had up to the moment taken the contrary side, made it evident that the most pious Dioscurus was the owner of the site. On the insistence of Dioscurus' brother, necessity arose that I read publicly the abusive paper that the blessed Paul had written in the shape of a letter addressed to your holiness,

an obscene and unpleasant satire directed against his brother, of which the burden of shame fell upon him who had spoken evil, not on him of whom evil had been spoken.

But to feel shame is only the second of the virtues. Sinlessness is of the Divine destiny and nature entirely, but one might ascribe to modesty the blush for what has been ill done. By admitting these principles in the present case, the reverend Paul gave evidence of a change of opinion more convincing than any rhetoric, for his confession of error, and the bitter grief he manifested as for evils he had voluntarily done, made us all favourably disposed towards him. This was not surprising in our case, but it was remarkable that the reverend bishop Dioscurus yielded to his adversary of his own free will, when he saw that he who had been until now so contentious had come to a more humble frame of mind. Although victorious by the votes of the judges, he was himself conquered by his own sentiment, and it became in the power of the reverend Paul to keep or give up the hill, as he should desire. The splendid Dioscurus was the first to suggest to him various concessions, to not one of which would he have listened for a moment before his repentance. He suggested to him to give up the hill alone, or to give up the whole property in exchange, and many other plans besides he devised, lavishing upon him ways in which a man might anticipate another's pleasure. But the other hesitated, he wished for one thing only, namely—to have the property by purchase on the same conditions as those by which his colleague Dioscurus had become the proprietor. Paul therefore became the proprietor of the vineyards and the olive groves in addition to the hill. Dioscurus, in place of his possessions, has the possession of magnanimity, a greater one in return for a less, and the honour of remaining within the gospel laws, which have declared the spirit of love to be the most important of its behests. This one thing only was worth commemorating, to wit, the agreement and harmony between the two brothers, passing over the fact that one who is a bishop had been convicted of stumbling, for it is best to allow acts that ought never to have been committed to pass into oblivion. But that Dioscurus should not be unlucky in everything,

I have granted his request that I should go through the whole matter very carefully, so that your holiness should be ignorant of nothing. He considers it of the very greatest importance that you should be made acquainted with the facts of the case, and that you should thus realize that he was struggling in no unjust cause. Now I commend the man for other qualities, for he is one after my own heart, but I exceedingly admire the feelings of respect by which he is moved for the dignity of your holy office. This I swear by your dear and sacred head : his fellow-poor at Alexandria owe Dioscurus much gratitude, for he helps them to cultivate their lands, and he is ubiquitous, and indefatigable in getting a profit from these even in bad years, and he knows how to turn all available chances to their advantage. Thus the quarrel between the two bishops has come to an end. You also gave me instructions to listen to the complaint of the presbyter Jason, the man who accused one of his colleagues of treating him with much unfairness. The case is somewhat as follows : Jason convicted Lamponian of wrong-doing, but the latter, though he anticipated the sentence by a confession, has his punishment in being debarred from attendance at ecclesiastical synods. Nevertheless he shed tears in repentance, and the people made supplications for his pardon. Notwithstanding all this, I confirmed the decision already rendered. I left the right of acquittal to the pontifical seat. I only took upon myself to allow that in case fatal necessity should press upon Lamponian, in case the day of death seemed at hand, any presbyter who might be present should admit him to the Holy Communion ; for may no man die in chains through me ! If on the other hand he should recover, let him undergo his punishment again, and from your divine and charitable spirit alone let him await the token of pardon. After all, Jason himself is not above reproach. He has a quick tongue, and he came up against a man whose hand is quicker, and the result is that, as the proverb says, for a word, the lightest of all things, a sentence the heaviest was his penalty.¹

Now as to the sum of money which I discussed, Lamponian

¹ κούφαν καὶ πτηνῶν λόγων βαρυτάτη ζημία.—Plato, *Laws*, 717 D.

admits that he has it, nor does he desire to be relieved on account of the shipwreck which caused the contract to disappear. He only seeks a favourable moment to sell his crops, and he said indeed that, dismissing all other matters, he was giving his mind to this one thing, how he might make restoration to his poorer creditors. The sum in question amounts to one hundred and fifty-seven pieces.

Now I must report on an abuse that is spreading amongst us, that it may perforce stop its course. Priests are prosecuting priests for lawless acts, I do not yet say by perjury, but at all events by malice prepense, for their object is not to punish those who are guilty, but to gain some illicit profit from the military chiefs. The burdens of all must needs fall upon my shoulders. Write, therefore, I beg of you, and ordain that it be permitted to no one to do anything of the sort. By so doing you will confer a favour upon me, and at the same time you will protect the more peaceable and the unfortunate. In a word, you will be doing a much better turn to the evildoers themselves, if it is the greater good to be delivered from a greater evil, and a greater evil to do injustice than to suffer injustice,¹ for the one thing is one's own, the other another's fault.

I have not revealed who these men are, and do not you for your part, if you know, convict any of them by name, that I may not be hated by my brethren. God will forgive me for reproving them greatly face to face in private, but do you appear to condemn the offence only in your letter to me. Without wounding any one, I shall with God's help find means of bringing to an end this unseemly behaviour of ours, not to say that of the whole Church.

Still one more point to settle, and I have finished my letter. A certain number of discharged men² are wandering about our neighbourhood. You must forgive me for using something of a foreign word, in order that by the more common vernacular of the country, I may put the wickedness of some more clearly. These

¹ Plat. *Georg.*, p. 469; cf. Mayor's copious note on Tertullian, *Apology*, c. 37 (p. 108 l. 14).

² A latinism, *vacantius*.

men do not wish to have an appointed see, and have left each their own, not so much by necessity as by caprice. They enjoy honours, travelling wherever they find most profit.

This, revered Father, is in my opinion the best line of conduct to pursue in regard to them. We ought to forbid every church to those who have renounced their own, and until they go and establish themselves in their own, no one should receive them at the altar, nor invite them to occupy the chief seats; we should overlook them amongst the crowd on the peoples' benches, when they burst into the church. They would return quickly to their own posts, if they feared for their dignity, which they now think to enjoy everywhere, rather than in the one place befitting; but they would prefer to enjoy their dignity there, rather than nowhere.

Thus, then, they should be treated in public, merely as private citizens, if so it seems well to your sacred throne also, but how to treat them privately in our own homes, we shall know only when an answer comes from your Holiness to that question which, you may remember, I put to you some time ago about Alexander, by race a Cyrenean, but ordained bishop in some city in Bithynia. He was expelled from his own see in troublous times, and now that he is able to return there, he refuses to take up his post again, but insists upon remaining in our midst.

Concerning this matter I wrote to your Holiness, going into all the details of his case, and I asked you how I ought to comport myself with him. As you did not reply, I do not know whether my letter reached you or whether it was lost. I talked over the whole matter with Dioscurus, that worthy bishop, and he ordered the scribes to hand over the copy of what I wrote beforehand, so that if you do not happen to have received my letter, when you have this document in hand, you can decide upon the merits of the case and send me your answer.

Above all, pray for me, for you will be praying for a man abandoned by all, deserted, and in need of such support. I shrink from asking of God anything for myself. All things are turning out quite contrary to my desires, on account of my rash presumption; a sinful

man, brought up outside the pale of the Church, and having received an alien training, I grasped at the altars of God.

68

To Theophilus

134

The man to whom I have given this letter is being dispatched to carry out a piece of business which piety does not allow me to specify ; but that he has cultivated virtue from his youth upwards, this it is just for me to say, and it is the truth itself. You will honour him therefore as a good man. In regard to the accusation he has made, let that fulfil its own destiny, for you surely would never meddle with a justifiable homicide.

69

To Theophilus

147

You care even for Pentapolis, you do indeed. You will, therefore, read the official correspondence, but further than this you will learn from the words of the messenger that greater and more numerous misfortunes have already come to pass than those which the letters menace. For he was sent to solicit military co-operation from thence, but the enemy did not wait even for his departure, and they have already spread *en masse* over the country. All is lost, all is destroyed. At the moment of writing, there is nothing left but the cities, nothing. What may befall to-morrow, God alone knows. In the face of this calamity your prayers are needed ; I speak of such prayers as are wont to stir the Almighty. As to myself, many times in private and in public have I already prayed in vain. Why do I say 'in vain' ? Everything is turning against me, so many and so heavy are our sins.

70

*To Proclus*¹

153

During the year which has just passed no letter has come to me from your sacred hand, and I look upon this as one of a number of

¹ Proclus seems to have been a great friend of Synesius. In Letter 129 to Pylæmenes he speaks of him as the 'admirable Proclus' from whom he borrowed sixty pieces of gold. In Letter 134 to the same correspondent he mentions a present of wine that he is sending to him.

calamities which have happened to me at this juncture. For I have suffered many griefs in many ways this last year, and now this winter has snatched away from me that child who was all the joy that remained to me. No doubt it was my fate to be happy when in your company, but when away to have experience of evil fortune. At all events may there come from your fatherly heart some letter that shall alleviate my grief, the most precious cargo that comes from Thrace!

71

To Pylaemenes

62

There are two letters in circulation addressed to you; for I am writing at the same time to Thrace and to Isauria, that I may in any case find you with one or other of the letters. The theme of both of them is a greeting to my dear friend Pylaemenes, the philosopher, for this he is, whether he wills it so or not. He can never completely get rid of his own natural bent. He will never succeed in extinguishing the spark of sacred fire, but some day, when he has risen above his vain pursuits, it will shine forth again.

72

To the Bishops

129

Let Andronicus who has deceived the Church have experience of her truth. Just now, even yesterday, he sinned against God and insulted man. For these reasons we closed the church here against him, and dictated a letter to your brotherhood, acquainting you with the sentence which had been passed upon him. He anticipated the dispatch of this letter by pretending to be a suppliant, and by making promise of repentance. All were desirous that I should admit him to penitence, except myself, for I thought that I knew the fellow only too well, and that he was quite capable

72. This encyclical letter points to the last act in the drama in which the Bishop and the Praefect were the protagonists. The event justified the opinion of the Bishop: Andronicus was finally excommunicated.

of saying and doing anything. I had this presentiment, and even predicted that he would return to his natural bent upon the very first opportunity. I thought, however, that he would be much less daring while under the load of our ecclesiastical sentence, than if he were entirely free of all suspicion. I therefore desired to hold by the decree, as the aim of my deliberations was to be at once pious toward God and useful to my fellow-citizens.

But it is presumptuous to attempt to resist, when you are alone against many, a younger man against elder men, one who had not taken office a year ago, against those whose lives have been spent in the priesthood. I therefore yielded to their demand that I should not circulate the letter yet, and that I should receive Andronicus, on his promise that henceforth he would give up his mad treatment of his peers, and that he would take reason as the guide of his life in the future, and not passion. 'If you remain', I said to him, 'within those limitations that you have set yourself, we will not only pray for the pardon of your sin, but for the future we will pray in your company. On the other hand, if you shirk the fulfilment of your agreement, the sentence awaits you, and will be made public before all men. The punishment will only be put off such a time as is necessary to let all see that your character is incorrigible.' So the matter was settled.

He assured us that he would give and we receive proof. He has given it, and we have received it. He has lavished upon us additional reasons for his excommunication. Up to that moment confiscation of property had not been ventured upon, and murder had not been taken in hand. To-day how many there are who are exiled because of this man, how many of those formerly rich have been reduced to beggary! But all this is nothing in comparison with the case of Magnus, so well born, so foully done to death. He lies fallen, this son of a distinguished citizen, after having spent his whole fortune on public objects. He has perished, a victim of one man's envy of another. Andronicus demanded gold of him; and when he would not give it, he was flogged; if he did give it, he was flogged again, because they found him a means of gain. How was it

that he was selling his estate not to his friends, but to the general? I mourn both over this young life treated so lawlessly, and the hopes of the city in it, thus rendered vain; but the old age of his mother is more pitiable than his youth. She had two sons: the one was exiled by Andronicus, and she knows not in what country he is. As to the other, she knows very well where he buried him. Alas for the laws trampled on even by these prefects who govern their country, and who in defiance of them borrow sums of money to purchase office! For these laws indeed God desires different guardians. As to us, it is sufficient to remain pure amongst the pure, if we but keep within the sacred precincts, and debar the unholy from the holy altars.

73

To Troilus

109

You are both a philosopher and a humane man; therefore I can lament with you the misfortunes of my country. You will honour her because of her citizen, the philosopher, and you will pity her because you have a gentle nature. Thus you have a double motive for lifting her up from her downfall, and you are able to do so because Anthemius¹ has the character that can save cities, and moreover he has fortune and statecraft. Now, whereas God has given him many things to this end, the greatest of all his gifts is the gift of friends, and the greatest of all these is Troilus. Read, therefore, I beg you, this letter which has been moistened with my many tears, read it not only with your eyes, but also with the full power of your mind. The Phoenicians may not rule Phoenicia, nor the Coelesyrians Coelesyria: an Egyptian can be a prefect everywhere except in Egypt. How then does it happen that the Libyans alone may administer their own country? Are the Libyans the only brave men, do they alone know how to defy the laws, these

¹ Anthemius, a man of singular probity, and recognized as such, was consul with Stilicho in 405, and was an intimate friend of S. John Chrysostom. Later, as Praefectus Urbi under the younger Theodosius, he administered the whole Empire with prudence.—Petavius.

laws against which evil natures throw themselves all the more, in proportion as the penalties assigned are more numerous and terrifying?

Cyrenean Pentapolis was doomed to perish utterly. War and famine have not yet annihilated it completely, as was foredoomed; but they are wearing it away and destroying it little by little. Now we have actually found out what was wanting for its quick destruction; and yet this is nothing but what the ancient oracle announced as to how Pentapolis must end. We have heard from our fathers and our grandfathers that 'Libya shall perish by the wickedness of its leaders'. This very sentence is an extract from the oracle. But even if this is its fate, devise some postponement of the evil. The physician's skill cannot prevent a man from dying sooner or later, for this is the course of nature. The utmost that it can do is to delay the inevitable end. Very well, all that we ask of the skill of our statesmen is to do something like this. Let them assist nature against the malady which we are enduring, let them not hasten our end. I pray that it may not come to pass in the time of the great Anthemius that Roman rule shall perish from the midst of the Province! Say to him, in the name of reason, say to him, Is it not you yourself who have caused a new law to be dispatched to supplant the old one, a law which threatens with many severe penalties those who should lay claim to govern their native country? Why does not your wrath, then, fall upon those who glory in breaking your administrative acts? If you know who they are, you are acting unjustly. If you do not know, you are acting carelessly. The man most fit to govern, ought not to act thus but to give his particular attention to this alone, to choose the most worthy men for the office of prefect. Divine and noble is that forethought which is employed in selecting a good man. In this way alone is it possible to watch over the interests of a whole nation. The first thing is to reject such men as trample upon the laws, who govern their country in defiance of the laws, and also, when borrowing money, give us as security, as if we were landed property. Put an end to this evil. Send us more law-abiding magistrates, neither knowing

us nor known by us, and who judge cases by their innate character, not according to each man's passions.

This is the situation at present. A governor is at sea, on his way here, one who formerly took a line of policy directed against the city, and is now fighting for his divergent political views from the tribunal. How many other evil by-products there are! Slanders are propagated at banquets, a citizen gets into trouble to please a woman. An informer is summoned; whosoever will not indict a person for proposing a measure contrary to the law is himself condemned, unless before condemnation he has already suffered all the penalties of the condemned. We have seen a man thrown into prison because he did not prosecute a magistrate for embezzling public funds, a magistrate who had just retired from the highest office. Or rather, we did not really see him, for they forbade us to approach him (as one is forbidden to approach those under a curse or enemies of the emperor), until they had done everything they wished. The poor wretch saw the light of day only because he had indicted Gennadius. But our own Pentapolis in many cases derived much help from Gennadius the Syrian. And most important of all, administering his office with moderation and persuasiveness, he has, without any one remarking it, brought more money to the public treasury than those of his predecessors who were most cruel and notorious for their harshness.

Thus no one had to shed tears, no one had to sell his farm. One might justly term this a pious contribution, which neither violence nor the lash compelled. But, as far as the citizens are concerned, alas for the memory of the past, alas for the experience of the present! Now, we ask nothing new, we only beg Anthemius to enforce the laws of which he is the guardian, and which are worthy of veneration owing to their antiquity, for in this consists the very sacredness of law; or, if it seem best to any one, let him enforce the newer edicts which register what one might call a still living kingdom.

74

To Pylaemenes

29

I have just sent you the treatise,¹ written in Attic style and of finished workmanship. If it obtains the approbation of Pylaemenes, the most critical of our audience, this very fact will be quite sufficient to recommend it to posterity. But if my book seems to you a frivolous production, remember that it is always permissible to treat light subjects lightly.

75

To Nicander

76

The following is a famous epigram of mine. How could it fail to be famous, when great Nicander himself has praised it?

Image of golden Cypris or of Stratonice.

You know, of course, that it was addressed by me formerly to my sister; you may learn so much from the verse. Theodosius of the Emperor's Guard is the husband of this one, the dearest to me of my sisters, to whom I have done honour with an epigram and a statue.² If one took account only of the duration and assiduity of his military services, Theodosius would have been promoted long ago, but intrigue is more powerful than years of service. Try to help him, therefore, in this way, even in lawsuits which he may have to go through before Anthemius. May he obtain the great Nicander's protection!

76

To Theophilus

135

The Olbiates, who are a village community, were obliged to elect a bishop to replace the blessed father Athamas, who died after passing his long life in the priesthood. They called me in to take part in their deliberations. I complimented the people on having

¹ The treatise in question is the 'Eulogy of Baldness'. See letter to Nicander (Letter 1).

² For Theodosius and Stratonice see Letter 7.

to choose between many candidates who were so entirely deserving, but I particularly complimented Antonius on account of his goodness, for he was thought nobler even than the noble, and it is upon him that everybody's choice is fixed. The choice of the multitude has had the full assent of two venerable bishops, with whom Antonius had been brought up, and by one of whom he had been ordained presbyter. I was not entirely without knowledge of Antonius myself, and as much as I knew of his deeds and words, so much I praised him, and, adding what I had heard to the good things I knew, I gave my vote to the man.

It would accord with my own wish to receive him into the honourable priesthood as a colleague. One thing only is needed, but the most important thing of all, namely, your sacred hand. The Olbiates have need of this, and I of your prayers.

77

To Anysius

127

Light and darkness are not wont to await each other. By a natural law, they avoid one another. Returning from escorting you we fell in with Andronicus.

78

To Anysius

128

Nothing could be more advantageous to Pentapolis than to give honour to the Unnigardae, who are excellent both as men and as soldiers, in preference to all the other troops, not only those who are termed native troops, but also all that have ever come into these districts as auxiliary forces. The truth is that these latter, even when they were much superior to the enemy in numbers, never yet gave battle with courage, but the Unnigardae in two or three engagements, with a handful of forty men, engaged an enemy of over a thousand.¹

¹ Cf. Sidonius, *Letters*, III. iii. 3. He writes to his brother-in-law Ecdicius as follows: 'At midday, and right across the middle of the plain, you brought your little company of eighteen safe through some thousands of the Goths, a feat which posterity will surely deem incredible. At the sight of you . . . those seasoned troops were smitten with stupefaction . . . they dared not even deploy for action. You cut down

Assisted by God and led by you, they have gained the greatest and most glorious victories. The barbarians had scarcely shown themselves when some were killed on the spot and others put to flight. They still patrol the heights, ever on the watch to drive back attacks of the enemy, like whelps springing out from the courtyard, that no wild beast may attack the flock. But we blush when we see these brave fellows weeping in the very midst of their strenuous service in our cause. It is not without sadness that I have read a letter which they have sent me, and I think that you also ought not to remain unmoved at their prayer. They make a request of you through me, and of the Emperor through you, which it were only fair that we ourselves should have made, even had they been silent, to wit, that their men should not be enrolled amongst the native units. They would be useless both to themselves and to us if they were deprived of the Emperor's largesses, and if, moreover, they were deprived of their relays of horses and of their equipment, and of the pay which is due to troops on active service. I beg of you who were the bravest amongst these, not to allow your comrades-in-arms to enter an inferior rank, but to let them remain without loss of their honours, in the security of their former position.

This might well be, if our most kind Emperor should learn through your representation how useful they have been to Pentapolis. Make of the Emperor another request on my behalf in your letter, namely, to add one hundred and sixty of these soldiers to the forty that we have already; for who would not admit that two hundred Unnigardae, with the aid of God, like unto these in heart and hand, and no less docile than brave, would suffice, when commanded by you, to bring the Ausurian war to an end for the Emperor? Of what use are many levies and the annual cost of maintaining the troops here? For war we need hands, not a list of names.

some of their bravest . . . you never lost a man, &c., &c. (Dalton's translation.) Dalton quotes a passage from Gregory of Tours confirming the above, only estimating the troops of Ecdicius as *ten* in number instead of eighteen.

79 *To Anastasius*¹ 124

I have not been able to do anything for the presbyter Evagrius any more than for any other of the wronged. We have Andronicus of Beronice for ruler, a wicked fellow, whose soul and tongue are equally detestable. It is of no consequence that he holds me in small esteem, but, what is more grave, he appears to me to be ashamed to reverence those things which are divine. In his pride he strikes heaven with his head. I swear by your dear and sacred head that he has wound a web of suffering about Pentapolis. He has invented thumb-screws and instruments of torture for the feet, and other strange machinery for inflicting punishments, which he employs, not against any guilty people, for every one is now free to do evil, but rather against those who pay property-tax, or who owe money in any shape or form. He is a clever fellow at finding pretexts for so doing, worthy of his own nature and of that of Thoas, the jailer, whom he has directed to collect sums of money which he needs for army purposes, the so-called *tironicum*.²

He is also exacting a sum for the needs of the court.³ Ever he finds some new evil to add to an old one, whereby torture may be inflicted on whole tribes and peoples. You may be as rich as you please and have plenty of money to pay with; nevertheless you will not escape the lash. Sometimes, while the slave is dispatched to the house to seek his master's ransom, the master is cudgelled, and runs the risk of losing several of his fingers. When Andronicus is without a pretext for making a banquet of cruelty, he falls back upon Maximinus and Clinias, and gratifies his passion upon them. A man so evil as this must, I think, be under the special protection of evil spirits, who pour honours and wealth upon perverted souls

79. This letter supplements Letter 57, q. v., in which the crimes of Andronicus are enumerated.

¹ For Anastasius see Letter 22.

² A Latin word, signifying the tax paid by a householder, who is thus freed from the requirement of furnishing a recruit (*tiro*) for the army.

³ This is a guess: τὰ αὐλαναῖα has not, so far as I know, been explained.

whom they use as their tools for the persecution of mankind. For all these reasons they grant him celebrity, as though to a noble character. Now is it fair to exalt the exalted and to humiliate the humble? Suppose that a man is of a simple and gentle nature; in the eyes of Andronicus he is of Carian destiny¹ and dishonourable. The only persons who are powerful in his eyes are Zenas and Julius. Zenas is the man who imposed a double tax last year, and who threatens to prosecute and to condemn my brother Anastasius, on the pretence that he carried out his ambassadorial duties dishonestly. At all events, he is in power by the will of Andronicus. Julius, on the other hand, has grown stronger against his will, nay, notwithstanding his complaints, and against no one is Julius more violent than against this very Andronicus. He has raised his voice against him two or three times, reviled him like a carter, threatened him with everything, saying all things such as I should have taken credit to myself for saying about the man. He has shown up this castaway as a mouse instead of a lion, and thus he treats him as a slave, nor does the man dare to whisper even in corners against his master—the common privilege, I suppose, of menials. Andronicus dare not even do this, for a fool is never courageous. He shows himself in turn cowardly or rash, but he is ever contemptible. Now the noble Hero will tell you in a manner worthy of himself what has happened to himself, if, after all, he survive. For he has suffered so from mere contact with the wickedness of this man, and from daily affliction through the dreadful things he has heard and endured, that he can scarcely hope to recover his own life, although he has been with difficulty saved from this fatal association. At that time Thoas was not yet home from that celebrated journey of his. But now that he has returned, he has raised in his own person a very fortress of Decelea,² to prevent all people of birth from departing. He brought with him the mysterious dream of the prefects, which signifies that some of those here should die, while others should be put in prison. Thus, because of the mysterious dream, some

¹ See the letter to Paeonius.

² For the historical reference, see Thucydides vii. 19, §§ 1-2.

among us are manacled, others without any apparent cause are dying—and if they have not already died, they will die at once. As far as the rod could do it, they have perished, and if they still live to-day when I am writing to you, it is only the robustness of their constitutions which has saved them.

‘The great Anthemius will not recover, nor shall the Roman prefect get rid of his fever, unless Maximinus and Clinias are put to death.’

This is the story which Thoas whispers in the ears of every one. On this account Andronicus refuses to allow Maximinus to contribute, and holds off by threats those who wish to purchase the property of Leucippus. It is not a question of replenishing the public treasury, but of giving back health to the prefects. The prefects made Thoas alone come home, he says, and, without any other witness of their interview than the sophist himself, they disclosed the dream to him. Then, as Thoas declares on oath, the harbours were closed until he should first have sailed out and communicated the secret to Andronicus, in order that none of those that deserved to die in place of Anthemius might escape in secret. Therefore, as the result of a dream seen by another, or rather said to have been seen, Pentapolis fares evilly in a waking state. Andronicus, who has been entrusted with this information, and is to be the benefactor of the prefects’ prosperous house, ‘now rages madly, trusting in’ Thoas. ‘He no longer’ knows how to ‘respect—

Or Gods or men, wild frenzy holds him fast’.¹

In the sad state into which our city has fallen, Evagrius had no need to consult a prophet to predict that he was bound to come

¹ *Iliad* ix. 238 :

Μαίνεται ἐκπάγλως, πίσυνος Διὶ, οὐδέ τι τίει
ἀνέρας οὐδὲ θεούς· κρατερὴ δέ ἐ λύσσα δέδυκεν.

‘rageth furiously, trusting in Zeus, and reckoneth not of God nor man, for mighty madness hath possessed him’.—Lang, Leaf, and Myers.

off badly, if his case should come up before the courts. Andronicus himself announced his intentions beforehand, not to outsiders, but direct to Evagrius himself. He bade him to be wise in time, and to take up the public duties of his own free will. For he would certainly give *his* vote for condemnation. Now I have made it my defence before God, the divine Dioscurides, and all men, that in worldly matters I myself am become more dishonoured than I was honoured, and weak instead of strong. When I was away, Andronicus courted my power, for that I twice saved him at Alexandria from prison. When I came back here, however, he showed himself quite another man to me ; by your sacred head, I swear it. When I was so unfortunate as to lose the dearest of my children, I might even have rid me of my life, so crushed was I with grief, and grief has always found me too much like a woman, as you know well. If I ended by overcoming my grief, this was not by any effort of my reason. It was Andronicus who changed the whole current of my ideas, and compelled me to think about nothing except public disasters. Troubles have become for me a consolation for troubles, drawing me towards them, and pushing out grief by grief. All the sadness that I felt for the death of my boy has given way to another sort of sadness mingled with wrath. You must know that my death had been predicted to fall upon a certain day of the year. That day turned out to be the one on which I entered on the priesthood. I felt a change in my life, I who up to the moment have held festal assemblies in it, and have enjoyed honour from men, and benevolence such as has been granted to no philosopher before me—no less outwardly than in the state of the soul.

To-day I am conscious of the loss of all these things. But the greatest of all my afflictions, and one which makes my life actually one of despair, is that, while accustomed up to this moment to find my prayers listened to, I now know for the first time that I appeal to God in vain. I see my house faring ill. I am compelled to dwell in my native city at a time of distress. I am situated so that all come to me to weep and groan, each for his own troubles. Andronicus has put the finishing touch to my misfortunes ; for

because of him I never enjoy for a moment the leisure to which I am accustomed. I am unable to be of any assistance to any of those who come to me for help, I am condemned to endure them when they reproach me for my helplessness. I therefore implore and supplicate both of you, but more especially you who are so dear to me, brother Anastasius, and who are said to be a protector of a demented man ; if you possess any power, use it, as is only right, in behalf of Synesius rather than of Andronicus, and save Ptolemaïs from shame, I beg you, that city which appointed me its bishop against my own will—as the all-seeing eye of God knoweth. I know not for what misdeeds I am paying so heavy a retribution. If we have incurred aforesometimes the envy of any one of the gods, as the saying is, we have made ample expiation. This statement it is only just to make on behalf of Maximinus and Clinias also, for even the most savage of the demons would, it seems to me, hold them in pity, all except Thoas and Andronicus, for these men are the only implacable demons.

80

To Theophilus

150

I was ready to place my hand and my judgement at the service of your paternal command. However, I do not think that Ampelius would have provided better for his own profit than did Nicaeus for his own loss ; nor do I clearly understand why he first went away, nor why he came back again, nor why he is once again away from home. How could I ? for I did not see him, nor was anything reliable reported about him. Quite another person brought me the letter written by your sacred hand, and asked me for this answer ; but Nicaeus had already weighed anchor, and I missed seeing him. No doubt the commander saw or heard something of him. As to that man, he neither saw nor heard anything. Now, how can Nicaeus win his case, if he lives abroad in the country ? It is true, he has plenty of good things in compensation, as many as the seasons bring to husbandmen, but there would have been still more of them if he had won the maternal inheritance also.

Even if Fortune is unable to take everything away from me, at least she wants to take away everything that she can, she who has 'bereft me of many excellent sons'.¹ But she can never take away from me the choice of the best, and the power to come to the help of the oppressed, for never may she prevail to change my heart! I abhor iniquity: for one may, and I would fain prevent it, but this also is one of those things which were taken from me; this went even before my children.

'Aforetime the Milesians were men of might.'² There was a time when I, too, was of some use to my friends. You yourself called me the providence of others. All respect which was accorded to me by the mighty of this earth I employed solely to help others. The great were merely my instruments. But now, alas, I am deserted and abandoned by all, unless *you* have some power to help. I account you as the only good thing that remains inviolate, along with virtue. You always have power, and long may you have it and make a good use of that power. I recommend to your care Nicaeus and Philolaus, two excellent young men united by the bond of relationship. In order that they may come again into possession of their own property, try to get support for them from all your friends, whether private individuals or magistrates.

Who, who should be admired by your peers? He that is prudent, orderly, well educated, and religious. In a word, such a man as

¹ *Iliad* xxii. 44.

² Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 1002: πάλοι ποτ' ἦσαν ἄλκιμοι Μιλήσιοι. The Scholiast says: 'In old days the Milesians were a strong power. The side to which they attached themselves was always victorious. So Polycrates of Samos, in designing war against an enemy, desired to ally himself with Miletus, and went to the oracle to inquire touching his design. The answer vouchsafed him was "Time was when the Milesians were valiant"?' . . . πάλοι ποτ' ἦσαν, κ.τ.λ. The proverb applies to persons who begin well, but end ill.—W. G. Rutherford, *Scholia Aristophanica*, vol. i, p. 101.

Gerontius. Now you have the man together with the letter. When you have made his acquaintance, you will say that my praise was not unmerited.

83 *To Chryses* 101

Not because this charming Gerontius is related to my children, do I recommend the young man to your friendship, although that in itself would be the best of reasons. It is rather because he is worthy of the golden Chryses in his manners, if I must express myself with the cold wit of a Gorgias. To say of you that you are included in the sphere of every virtue, and that the man who is to hand you this letter is most worthy to enjoy intimacy with you, is the very truth.

84 *To his Brother* 102

A lengthy letter argues unfriendliness in the carrier, but the charming Gerontius knows all that I know, and if he were not unfriendly to falsehood, I think he would say concerning me even more than he knows, because he loves me, and has speech equal to the expression of his thought. If you see him with gladness, then you will see him as I wish.

85 *To his Brother* 103

Receive with the living letter also the lifeless one. The one is the charming Gerontius, the other these written lines. They are written to you rather that I may conform to custom, than from any necessity for communicating with you. I live with you always in memory. This is what the young man will tell you with a much more powerful voice than ten thousand letters.

86

To his Brother

104

I have entrusted to the charming Gerontius a letter addressed to your august and thrice-longed-for self, one that offers an opportunity for your first meeting. Then perchance you will honour him for my sake, but, after you have made trial of him, you will honour some one else for his.

87

To his Brother

133

The man to whom I have given this letter is a paymaster and quartermaster of the Dalmatian cohort.¹ I love all the Dalmatians as if they were my own children, because they are the people of the city to which I was appointed bishop. This is all that I had to tell you. It is for you now to give a welcome to my friends, as if they were your own.

88

To Pylaemenes

26

Some letters dated last spring have just come to me from Thrace. I turned the whole bundle upside down, to see whether it would contain one upon which the famous name of Pylaemenes might be written. It would indeed have been unworthy of me to read any other first, but there was none anywhere. If you are really away from home, I wish you a quick and happy return. But if you were still on the spot at the moment when all my friends gave their letters to Zosimus, it really would be surprising if any one was more mindful of me than Pylaemenes.

¹ The other evidence for Dalmatian cohorts is found mostly in Northern Europe. This reference has been overlooked by the author of the article *Cohors* in Pauly-Wissowa, Bd. iv, pp. 280-4.

89

To his Brother

146

Up to this moment I had been happy. Then, as it were, a counter-wave of misfortune dashed against me, and both public and private affairs are now paining me. I live, not as a private citizen, in a country which is a prey to war, and I am bound continually to condole with every one's misfortunes. Often in a month I have to rush to the ramparts, as if I received a stipend to take part in military service rather than to pray. I had three sons: only one remains to me. But if only you sail with a fair wind and live happily, fortune is not wounding me on all sides.

90

To Theophilus

132

Justice has gone from out mankind. In the past Andronicus did injustice, but now he in turn is treated with injustice. Nevertheless it is the character of the Church to exalt the humble and to humble the proud. The Church detested this man Andronicus on account of his actions, wherefore she pressed for this result, but now she pities him for that his experiences have exceeded the measure of her malediction. On his account we have incurred the displeasure of those now in power.

After all, it were dreadful if we could never take our stand with those that are prosperous, and if we were ever weeping with them that weep. So we have snatched him from the fell tribunal here, and have in other respects greatly mitigated his sufferings. If your

89. The war was evidently at its maximum of intensity when this letter was written. Druon gives 412 as the date.

90. This letter forms a curious epilogue to the struggle between Synesius and his enemy Andronicus: see Introduction; Letters 57, 58, 72. Gibbon (xx. v) comments: 'These spiritual terrors (i.e. the excommunication) were enforced by a dexterous application to the Byzantine court; the trembling president implored the mercy of the church; and the descendant of Hercules enjoyed the satisfaction of raising a prostrate tyrant from the ground. Such principles and such examples insensibly prepared the triumph of the Roman pontiffs, who have trampled on the necks of kings.'

sacred person judges that this man is worthy of any interest, I shall welcome this as a signal proof that God has not yet entirely abandoned him.

91

To Troilus

121

In days gone by when I conversed, or when I wrote to my friends, our intercourse was free from care. I lived in a sense with my books, and was quite out of touch with any city or political life. But now God has assigned me a definite spot to dwell in, and has ordered me to take a certain rank in the city, and to live amongst a limited number of men. I should like, therefore, to be useful to my colleagues, and to do as much good as possible to individuals in private as also to the city in public. In other words, I desire in this voyage of life, as one might call it, to see my shipmates in a pleasant light, and so to be seen by them.

I wrote to you to recommend Martyrius.¹ If it be in your power to do him a good turn, be assured that you are doing me a kindness in the person of one who is my daily companion. I call our past discussions, so dear to us both, to witness that Martyrius is devoted to me. He often sits up even to a very late hour of the night, in order to keep me company.

92

To his Brother

44

I shall get no small harm from the rusticity of my character, for you must know my way of speaking the truth bluntly has followed me even to the bounds of Libya.

93

To Hesychius

130

The Athenians praised Themistocles, the son of Neocles, because, although as much a lover of political power as any man of his time,

¹ See Letters 47 and 19. Martyrius was so great a friend of Herodes that Synesius addresses Letter 19 to the two in common. We learn from Letter 47 that Martyrius assisted Synesius to see the law enforced at a critical moment, and in this way exposed himself to no small risk.

he declined every office in which his friends should possess nothing more than strangers. The times have recognized your merits. Through you an office, new both in name and in reality, has come into the administration of the State. I am very glad of this, as is quite natural when one considers our old friendship, and that sacred geometry has linked us one to the other. But when I see that you deem my brother's name worthy to be ranked in the list of senators, and yet do not strike out his family from the black list, although under a cloud of ancient misfortune something happened before, I can only say that in this you are not behaving as an imitator of Themistocles, nor in accordance with the principles of divine geometry. You ought to treat Euoptius as among the number of your brothers, if it is true that two things equal to the same thing are equal also to each other.

If through your too numerous occupations you have hitherto neglected your duty, do at once honour my claim upon you, my dearest friend, and after receiving my letter, exempt his mother-in-law both in the future and in the past from the absurd fine. Also give me back my brother. God knows whether he has left the country on this very account. But that is the only excuse Euoptius gives for not being here to console me. I have great need of consolation for many misfortunes of which you have certainly heard.

As soon as I learned the bad news from Cyrene the other day (that the enemy were approaching), I thought of sending to you at once at Teucheira to acquaint you with the fact, but a messenger came to inform us that the general had already occupied the high ground. You then knew it first. May God reward you for your alertness, both now and hereafter! But I send my congratulations to you at the same moment as my inquiry into the state of your affairs. They are, I hope, in a satisfactory condition. I have very much at heart—how could it be otherwise?—the happiness of Pentapolis, my mother-country, as the Cretans might say: and at

the same time I have great interest in you and your glory, and at each step of your good fortune the whole world wants to congratulate me.

Since, then, my own reputation is dependent on you, O best of men and of generals, I have a right to know what you are doing. I exhorted Joannes to do his best to distinguish himself as a valiant soldier with the help of God. Give him your protection on account of his brother, who will render you as many services as all the others put together. I know these two young men intimately, and I know in what great esteem they hold each other. I give you the advice which seems to me the best. If you agree with me, support it with your authority. Salute on my behalf the comrades who are serving under your orders. I wish to see my friend return soon, and he will bring me, I am sure, good news of the war. Although he is very timid, he has set out upon his way boldly, under the protection of your arms. Send back the two brothers to Cyrene—they will fight for their country—that country which has brought them up and nourished them.

95

To his Brother

88

You think that I am inclined to yield to your injunctions, at least so you write to me. You are quite right in entertaining this opinion of me. How grateful I am to you for the favour I have received, if one may admit that an elder brother owes gratitude to a younger one for his obedience, and this I can scarcely believe. But it suffices me for recompense that you recognize my attitude, that you are the only person in the world at whose mercy I am.

When, however, you say that you are sure that friendship with me is Julius' great desire, this idea is not worth a moment's consideration. Yours is the view of a man who is deceived, I do not say deceiving. At the very moment when I was reading your letter, another person was reading one from Julius.¹ You tell me one

¹ Of the Julius mentioned in this letter an interesting if somewhat fanciful picture

story, and he says the very reverse. He knows also from what he has read and heard, that Julius expresses himself about me in very unfriendly language. Now, as he is an honourable man who has reported this to me, it is impossible for me not to believe him: but although I do believe him, I call to witness the God who presides over our brotherly affection, that I do not regret having been useful to Julius. Only yesterday I had to resort to force to rid him of the prosecutor who was arraigning him on a charge of impiety, for an offence to the Emperor's household. Now by your sacred head I had to resist innumerable attempts on the part of the judge and the accuser. The first, out of cowardice, would not admit of a change of front in an affair of this sort: the second, with the courage of despair, and as one pleading dire necessity, showed himself determined both to do and undergo evil. The whole case might have had awful consequences, not only for Julius' wife and children, but also for very many of his relations and friends, rich and poor. In a word, a very Iliad² of misfortunes would have threatened our city from the mere fact that one desperate individual was determined to die. Julius might have won his case, but only under conditions which would have rendered his life impossible. For all these reasons I felt compelled to act as I did. By all means let my enemies profit by my nature and will! I would much rather do kind offices to some one unworthy of them, than leave many to be

will be found in Lapatz, pp. 309 sq. This obviously intriguing personage was opposed to Synesius on the question most dear to his heart, namely the exemption of foreigners from service in the Roman army, and the enrolling of all Romans. The arguments in favour of this course he had given with great eloquence in his address to the emperor Arcadius (see Introduction). Another reform which Synesius desired was the abolition of the military commandership in the province, and the transferring of his functions to the Count of Egypt—as in the past. These political enmities seem to have degenerated into personal animosity. Crawford (q. v.) remarks (p. 381): 'At the same time, he (Synesius) entirely refused to try in any way to punish him (Julius). Far from doing so, he was generous enough to take Julius' part on an occasion when he believed him to have been recklessly accused of a crime of which he was not guilty.'

² Demosthenes, *De Falsa Legatione*, 387: εἰχὼν γ' Ὀρχομενὸν . . . καὶ ἐβδομήκοντα καὶ διακοσίους ἀπεκτόνεσαν ἐπὶ τῷ Ἡδυλείῳ καὶ τρόπαιον εἰστήκει, καὶ ἱπποκράτουν, καὶ κακῶν Ἰλιδὲς περιειστήκει Θηβαίους.

a target for undeserved blows of fortune, when I can save them.¹ I certainly do not hate this man's well-born wife, or his young children. And yet neither does he deserve to suffer any evil from me on account of his slanders of me; far from this.

It is true that the man is detestable. He talks with the intent to injure me, and only opens his mouth for the purpose of backbiting me. His purpose therefore is not blameless, but culpable.² Nevertheless, let him know, or rather let him not know all this, for in the latter case he might cease benefiting me.³ You at any rate must know by experience the truth of the old proverb, 'Even enemies have their uses.' Now this has been proved by the facts. After all, what does the fellow not contribute for my glory? When people desire to speak well of me, if they are at a loss how to add to their praise of me, the highest eulogy, the very *ne plus ultra* of praise, is theirs in these few words, 'Julius speaks ill of him.' What a swarm of truths is there not in this one phrase, for to be antagonistic to every kind of evil is to be intimate with every kind of virtue! For myself, I could never be conscious of such virtue. It is he who declares it, and as everything he denies gains credence, I am very grateful to him for this result. I swear by thy sacred head and by the life of my children, that there is no greater favour he could confer on me than to slander me, for this is the highest claim that I have to the esteem of God and man. Julius will end in being punished for his line of conduct, not that I shall ever take vengeance on him—no, perchance not even if I could, would I do so; and certainly even if I would I could not. What influence could an unfortunate man like me have with the present governor?

¹ Or, 'overlook the case of so many who are on the brink of misfortune, when I could avert it.'

² 'All these honest people—Auxentius, Eupotius, etc.—make up the little party of the opposition—the patriots; Synesius is at their head. John and Julius lead the herd, I mean by that the praefectorial party. Let us speak of Julius; the others are not worth commenting on. He is an ambitious man, one who runs after honours, money, and pleasure . . . he cares very little for the praefect. The important thing is himself. He hates Synesius but, knowing that he is loved as much as himself is detested, he plays a cunning game. He says all manner of good about him in public and everything evil in private.'—Lapatz, p. 309.

³ Plato, *Apology*, 41 D.

hunted as I am from my home, wandering without hope of return, with the enemy encamped on my property, and making of my house a base whence to menace Cyrene. To whom then, to whom will he pay the penalty? To Justice herself. I pledge myself to this. I am profoundly convinced of it. Justice will overtake him in behalf of me and our common city, for it is for her sake we have adopted opposite courses in public affairs, and on her account that we have become enemies—he and I. Even he could not say that I acted for any private interest of my own, for in the first place I saw the army and the senate falling under the yoke of mercenaries, and I endeavoured to resist.¹ Then the matter of the embassy was a most conspicuous cause of discord between us. I pass over the case of my friend Dioscurides; for that was conducted with restraint, and so as not to stir up the wrath of God or man. Clearly it is Justice about whom we sing with the lyre thus:

Thou comest in secret at their heels,
Thou bendest the proud neck,
Thy law imposes itself on every mortal.

But when we had to vote, I proposed for the sake of my native city that the ranks of the army should be closed to foreigners, but he opposed me in the interest of Helladius and of Theodorus. And yet, who does not know that even the most enthusiastic officers lose all their professional spirit, once they are in touch with these foreigners, and that they are changed into merchants? On another occasion I made a proposal to abolish the supreme military command in our country, for everybody here agrees that the only remedy for our evils is for the cities to revert to their old government; in other words, that the Libyan cities ought to be put under the prefect of Egypt. But Julius opposed all this in order to keep his gains, and he had actually the impudence to say that it is a good plan to make soldiers out of the worst types of men. 'Well, my friend' (say this to him, for it is fitting that he should be told this by you), 'the reason that you are now execrated is that

¹ Cf. *De Regno*, § 14, p. 1092 A.

you scheme against the common weal; you are happy, while the people are miserable; but I am suffering with my fellow citizens. Understand, nevertheless, that it is a law of nature that the parts are involved in the whole. When from a disease of the body the spleen becomes seriously enlarged, as long as the body endures, it grows strong and fattens, but when that dies it perishes also. So at the present moment everything smiles on you, but you do not see that by your measures you will ultimately be fatal both to your city and to yourself. Lasthenes was called the friend of Philip up to the day when he betrayed Olynthus. When one has no longer any city, how can one be happy?’

I call to witness that divinity whom both philosophy and friendship honour, that I should have preferred many deaths to the bishopric. But God has imposed upon me not what I desired but what He wished. I pray Him, therefore, who has been the giver of my life, to be its protector also, so that this office may not seem to me a descent from the realm of philosophy, but rather a step upwards to it. Meantime, just as if any pleasure had come to me, I should have shared it with you, my dearest friend, so also I send to you the recital of my griefs, in order that you may suffer with me, and that after scrutinizing the matter in question with reference to my character, you may, if possible, express an opinion as to what I ought to do. As it is, I am trying to tackle the matter at a distance. I have been for over six months in this dreadful position, far from the men amongst whom I shall be a priest. I am waiting to learn exactly what the nature of this office is. If it is possible, I will perform the duties with philosophy, but if it cannot be reconciled with my school of thought and sect, what better could I do than sail straight for illustrious Greece? For if I refuse the priesthood, I can no longer dream of returning to my own city either, unless I am prepared to be the most dishonoured and accursed of all men, living amidst a crowd of enemies.

97

To Olympius

59

On reading the letter wherein you spoke to me of your illness, I was at first alarmed. At last I was reassured, for after first alarming me about a danger you had incurred, you ended by announcing the good news of your recovery. As to the things you asked me to send or to bring you, all that are possible will certainly be sent or brought. But which of them are possible, and which impossible, it is needless to say, for the gift itself will declare. Live on in health and happiness, and acceptance with God, friend thrice dear! May we soon be together again, and rejoice in one another! Do not set out before we meet. But if Heaven decide otherwise, at least remember me, in spite of our separation. You will meet with many better people than Synesius, but you will never find any others who love you more.

98

To Olympius

57

How do you think I received your pleasant letters, I who was thirsting to hear from you; and o'er what passages in them did not my heart melt? They inspired many different feelings, and I look forward to seeing again soon that Alexandria where there still lives a friend who is so dear to me. In taking so great an interest in Secundus, you have done me great honour, and in honouring him so in your letter you have attached us to yourself, and have made us yours entirely.¹

As I am one of those men who walk humbly, I do not deem myself worthy of so great honour. For you do me a double honour, both by the greatness of what you have written, and by the zeal of your actions. I have already written frequently to my Lord the Count, but as in the letter I received through the young man you reproach me for not writing to him, I have entrusted my brother with a letter to him. Take care of your health, continue happy, give yourself up to philosophy, as it befits one to do who has

¹ A similar sentiment is expressed in regard to his brother. See Ep. 95.

cloven to her, led on by divine love. I am writing to you from my bed, holding myself up with difficulty to form the letters. Pray that the best things may be mine, whatsoe'er God may adjudge the best. If I recover, I am off to Alexandria at once.

99

To Olympius

58

This is a new practice of mine in the use of letters. I have written, not to recommend the bearer of this to your friendly offices, but rather to give you the benefit of the acquaintance of a man who will be very useful both to you and to your beloved friend the great Diogenes. Do not be angry with me if I believe, and if I say, that the advantage will be on your side, and not on Theotimus'. But this is the case, since this man is the most inspired poet of our times, and since every one needs the power of the poet, in order that he may be famous for posterity, and may not escape the notice of those who are distant. Great actions, if they do not gain his clarion notes, disappear from men's memories, and are clothed in oblivion. They blossom only at the moment in which they are accomplished amongst those who witness them. Therefore this godsend ought to be honoured by you, and ought to be welcomed above everything, quite apart from any personal interest, for out of reverence for the Muses one should honour their priests, and never hold them in less esteem than those who know how to dispense flattery at your gates.

Let there be also a third reason why you should give honour to Theotimus. It is that Synesius is an admirer of all his good qualities, of all those for which men praise men and deem them happy. May you pass your life in good health, you whom I honour for every reason! All who live in my house send greetings to your illustrious person, and above all your own Ision. I send greetings to all those who are with you, and above all to my dear Abramius. You yourself shall judge whether or not you ought to hand over what I have written to the Count.¹

¹ The Count in question is evidently Paeonius.

100

To Pylaemenes

30

Here at last is that Anastasius about whom I have so often spoken. If I had been introducing you to him, I should have praised you as I am praising him at this moment. You are both of you neighbours in my heart, and have been so for a long time past. Let your meeting, therefore, be an act of recognition. Embrace each other, and see in this, both of you, a means of doing me a little good. Now leisure is the greatest good, a good of which one might say that, like a country bearing in abundance, it brings all noble things to the soul of the philosopher. This leisure I shall enjoy when I succeed in freeing myself from entanglement in the political life of the Romans; and that will be when I am released from these accursed curial functions. So far as the Emperor is concerned, I am free of them, but I should justly blame myself and feel ashamed, if I were to take any profit from my personal activity. I shall accordingly make my defence to myself. For I shall appear to be fulfilling the duty of ambassador again, since my tongue is again an ambassador; nor will any one who praises Pythagoras contradict me, since he defined a friend as a second self.¹

101

To Pylaemenes

34

A man from Phycus (Phycus is a harbour of the Cyreneans) has brought me a letter written in your name. I have read it both with pleasure and admiration. It was worthy of both, because of its note of feeling and because of the beauty of its language. I quickly called together in your honour an assembly of the Greeks who reside in Libya, and I told them to come and listen to an eloquent letter. And now in our cities Pylaemenes, the creator of the divine letter, is famous. One thing only seemed strange, and struck the audience as contrary to expectation. You asked for my *Cynegetica*, as if there were some value in it. You seemed, therefore, to reveal a humorous disposition, and to be brimming with

¹ Aristotle, *Ethics*, ix. 4: "Ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός

sarcasm ; but the Cyreneans did not admit that the poorest speaker among them could have produced something in a sportive vein worthy of your attention : but I acquitted you on this charge of sarcasm. I explained that besides the rest of your good qualities, you were extremely kind, and lavish in your praise ; that thus you had not made the request in jest, but rather to fill me with joy that I had been honoured by such a judge as you. Write to me, therefore, as often as you can. Give the Cyreneans a feast of eloquence.

No recital could be pleasanter to them than the letters of Pylaemenes, now that they have been inspired by this example. At all events you will meet plenty of men on their way here, and it no others, at least those who are to be our rulers, both of the less and the greater province, and the province of Egypt as well. It is easy to recognize them by the train of money-lenders who follow them. Since it interests you to know about my life, we study philosophy, my dear friend, and we have only splendid isolation for our fellow-worker, not one human being. I have never anywhere in Libya heard a man uttering a philosophical phrase except when an echo is repeating my own voice. But as the proverb says, ' Adorn the Sparta which fate has given you.'¹ And for my part I think I shall be content with my own fate, and shall myself adorn it, regarding this as a contest set before my life, and as a test, whether I am abandoning philosophy in her evil days. If I have no other witness, at least God himself will bear witness for me, God whose seed, the intellect, has come to man. I think even the stars at all times fix a kindly gaze upon me, for they see that I alone in this vast stretch of country examine them with knowledge. Pray for me, then, that I may remain in my present way of life, and for yourself, that you may abandon the ill-omened forum, you who use your natural gifts so ill.

How I long to see you turn your thoughts to what is within, even when your outward circumstances are prosperous ; for to exchange happiness for prosperity is to barter gold for bronze.² For myself,

¹ Euripides, *Telephus* (fragment) : Σπάρτην ἔλαχες, κείνην κόσμει.

² This comparison is from Homer, *Iliad*, vi. 236.

I rejoice when they twit me with being myself a private citizen, the while all my many relations are eager for office. I prefer that my soul should be guarded by virtues, rather than my body by soldiers, since no longer do circumstances afford room for a philosopher to control the State. Even if you do not get on any better in the forum (which I do not believe for a moment), at all events I have never had gloomy anticipations about you, such as thinking that you would turn false to your character, and that you might come to resemble those famous scribes; I would not dignify them by the name of orators.

Now in no other manner is it possible to get rich in your courts except by a general confusion of human and divine justice, and by becoming a knave instead of an honest man. If, therefore, you are not even getting rich, look to philosophy all the more. If you come across an earnest philosopher, share with me your great acquisition. It is quite a harmless quest, to wander through Greek and foreign lands on such a hunting expedition as this.

But if, as amidst a harvest blighted by drought, we seem to suffice unto you, come and take your share of us and whatever is ours, 'on fair and equal terms', as the Lacedaemonian saying has it. Give all my kindest messages to the venerable Marcian. If I had said in the language of Aristides¹ that he was the image of Hermes, the god of eloquence, come amongst men, I should scarcely have praised him as he deserves, for he is more than an image. I should have liked to write to him directly, but I have become stiff, that I may not expose myself to corrections from the pedants who polish every syllable. There is no small danger that the letter would be read in the Panhellenion. This I call the place in which many a time I thought deep thoughts, where the famous from all parts of the world meet, to hear the sacred voice of the old gentleman whose researches comprehend tales both past and present. Give my compliments to my friend Eucharistus, and to all those to whom you think it fitting.

¹ Aristides, ii, pp. 100, 116 (Jebb).

I ask your friendship and protection for my dear Sosenas, born and brought up in learning, who is not meeting with the rewards from fortune which should follow learning. He throws the blame on his city's unfortunate condition, and some line of reasoning is persuading him that it is possible to change one's fortune with one's domicile. He is going to the Imperial city, persuaded as he is that where a king is, there Fortune is also, and will perchance discover him. Accomplish for him whatever he desires, if it is in your power, for you are worthy to have power, and to assist to good fortune those that are in need. If Sosenas has any need of your friends, you will introduce him to them yourself.

No, my dear Pylaemenes, I call to witness the God who presides over our friendship, I never dreamt of ridiculing your love of your country. Have I not also a city and a home? You did not understand the meaning of my letter, and you impute to me a fault of which I am innocent. You love Heraclea. You are eager to be of some use to your native town, and I approve of this. What I meant to say to you was, that you ought to put philosophy before your avocations at the bar. You seem to me to think that you can serve your native city more eminently as a pleader of causes than as a philosopher. This being the case, in order to explain your persistence in this idea, you alleged your love of country. I took the liberty of scoffing, not at this patriotism of yours, but at the reason that you gave for your preference. You are very much mistaken if you think that in attaching yourself to the bar, you are going to do any good at all to this city you love. If I were to say that philosophy is a sufficient force in itself to lift up cities, Cyrene would refute me, for she has fallen lower than any of the cities of Pontus. But what I do not fear to assert is, that philosophy more than rhetoric, more in fact than any art or science you like to name,

for she is the very queen of all, philosophy, I say, makes the man who possesses her of the highest usefulness to individuals, families, and states. No doubt she cannot by herself make men prosperous, for the fact is, my dear Pylaemenes, of our pursuits those which are beautiful have a certain power in the perfecting of the soul's preparation, and by these alone is it possible for that soul to profit; but it is on fortune and on outside circumstances that the rise and decline of cities ultimately depend. To-day they are prosperous, to-morrow they will be miserable, because the mortal lot in which they participate has so willed it.

We grant you that you love your city. So do I. You cultivate rhetoric. All I wish is that you attach yourself not to the rhetoric of the bar, but to that right and noble rhetoric that even Plato himself, in my opinion, does not try to prohibit. For my own part I honour philosophy, and I honour it more than any other human possession. But what good can you or I do cities by our work, unless lives adequate to our aims could be dedicated to it? For every work we must have suitable material; we must have tools for the man who can use them, and it is only fortune which will ever give us all this. But if you really think that fortune will favour you through the art of rhetoric alone, and will suffice to bring you to a position of authority or the highest public office, that of prefect, why, in case of failure, should you blame philosophy for your ill fortune? And again, if the chances of success and failure are the same in philosophy and in rhetoric (I mean neither greater nor less), why not choose meantime that one which is better in itself? You yourself admit that philosophy in itself is worth more than rhetoric, but you say that since you desire to be useful to your city, it is the less worthy of the two sciences that has become the more necessary to you. As things now are, one may hope for the best, but the philosopher will have all the gods for his enemies, and they will draw fortune away from him, so that he will not be left even in enjoyment of his hopes. For my part I never before now heard it said that misfortune is the divine lot of revered philosophy. No doubt it is very rare for power and wisdom to be found in the same

man, but sometimes God unites them both. It follows then perforce from the argument that the same man is philosopher and patriot, nor does he despair of fortune, but rather looks forward to the best, by reason of his own intrinsic merit.

For in this one point especially, as the old saying has it, do the virtuous surpass the evil, I mean in their fair hopes. How then shall we admit that they will have the lesser reward? But so we must, if we adopt the argument which has brought you to such a degree of error, that you say you must needs remain in your profession for the sake of the city.

Suffer me now to turn this defence of my mocking humour into an accusation, for although you used to be convinced of the truth of that which as a matter of fact was not true, I am persuaded that you think so no longer.

You see that I am in danger of becoming embroiled with the sacred Cyrene, and all by your fault, through you, though you are the dearest of my friends. For if you persuade the cities that rhetoric alone can rid them of their present misfortunes, and that they will get real help only from those who come to the aid of people engaged in lawsuits over their contracts, in that case they will hate those of us who are busied with anything else rather than lawsuits. Now there is but one statement I have to make to you and to all the cities, in the name of philosophy. This is, that if circumstances with the aid of fortune call philosophy to take part in the administration, then no other science, not even all the sciences together, will be able to govern public affairs so well as this very philosophy. None will be so able to harmonize jarring elements, to make improvements, and to benefit the interests of the citizens. But as long as fate does not tend in this direction, it is wiser to mind one's own business, and not to govern badly nor behave oneself unseemly in the attempt to jostle for the magistracy of such and such a town, unless it is absolutely necessary. 'The Gods themselves', it is said, 'do not fight with necessity.'¹

For our part, we are following a much higher aim, for when the

¹ Cf. Homer, *Iliad*.

intellect is not occupied with things here below, it is occupied with God. There are two parts in philosophy, contemplation and action. Wisdom presides over the one, and prudence over the other. But prudence needs to be seconded by fortune, whereas wisdom is an end in itself, and nothing can prevent its being freely exercised.¹

104

To his Brother

22

How often one sees the same men who are very courageous in peace-time, showing themselves cowardly at the moment of combat ! That is to say, they are worthless everywhere. Thus it seems to me that every one should be thankful to war, for it is an exact touchstone of the blood in the heart of each one of us. It takes away many boasters, and returns them to us more temperate men. In the future, I think, we shall no longer see the guilty Joannes swaggering about the public square, and attacking with kicks and blows men of a peaceable disposition. Indeed, yesterday the proverb, or rather the oracle, received clear confirmation, for you certainly know it as an oracle, that : There be no long-haired men who are not degenerates.

For some days now they have been warning us of the approach of the enemy. I thought that we ought to march out to meet these. The leader of the Balagritae drew up his forces, and sallied out with them. Then, having occupied the plain first, we waited. The enemy did not appear. In the evening we went away home each of us, after we had arranged to return upon the following day. During this time Joannes the Phrygian was nowhere ; at least he was invisible, but he spread rumours in secret, at one moment that he has broken a leg and they have been obliged to amputate it, at another moment that he is suffering from asthma, later that some other untoward fate has overtaken him. Such tale-bearers kept drifting in from different sides, or so they pretended, the object being, no doubt, that no one should know into what retreat our man had slipped, or where he was concealed. And you should have heard

¹ Here our Platonist is speaking with the voice of Aristotle.

them in the midst of their narration deploring the unlucky misfortune with tears in their eyes.

‘Ah! Now is the moment when we need his generous spirit—strong hands like his. What wonderful things he would have done, how he would have shone!’ In each case, crying, ‘Oh, evil destiny!’ they wrung their hands and disappeared. Of course, they all belong to that company which Joannes fed at his table, for no good purpose—men with long hair like himself, base creatures, ‘impudent thieves of lambs and goats’,¹ and, by the gods, sometimes of women also. Such are the henchmen that he has been preparing for a long time. To be a man amongst them he never attempts. That would be too difficult. He is a cunning fellow withal, and he seeks the best opportunities of appearing a man in the eyes of those who are real men, but methinks fortune has upset all his calculations famously.

For five days we had in vain sallied out in arms to find the enemy, but they were always at the frontier places which they were engaged in devastating. Then when Joannes was convinced that the enemy would not dare to come into the heart of the country, he himself appeared and is now turning everything into confusion. He ill? Never! Why, he was even laughing at the people who believed such a story. He had come from a great distance, he said, I know not whence. He had been called there to bring assistance, and it was owing to this that the districts which had called on him were saved, for the enemy did not invade, terrified as they were at the mere rumour of the approach of Joannes. Once he had tranquillized everything

¹ The quotation is from the *Iliad*, xxiv. 255–62. Priam, after the death of Hector, upbraids his remaining sons thus:

ὦ μοι ἐγὼ πανάποτμος, ἐπεὶ τέκο νῆας ἀρίστους
 Τροίην ἐν εὐρείῃ . . .
 τοὺς μὲν ἀπώλεσ’ Ἄρης, τὰ δ’ ἐλέγχεα πάντα λέλειπται,
 ψευδαῖ τ’ ὄρχησται τε, χοροῖτυπῆσιν ἀριστοὶ,
 ἀρνῶν ἢ δ’ ἐρίφων ἐπιδήμιοι ἀρπακτῆρες.

‘Woe is me all unblest, since I begat sons, the best men in wide Troy-land . . . all these hath Ares slain, and here are my shames all left to me, false tongued, light heeled, the heroes of the dance, plunderers of your own people’s sheep and kids.’—Leaf, Lang, and Myers’ translation.

there, he rushed up, so he said, to the menaced province. He is waiting for the barbarians, who may appear at any moment, so long as they are not aware of his presence, and so long as his name is not mentioned. So here he is, spreading confusion everywhere. He is claiming to be at the general's right hand, he is promising that in no time at all he will teach the art of victory. He is shouting 'Front form! fall into line! form square to the flank!'. In a word he is using all the words of the military profession without any knowledge of their meaning.

Thus some considered him a man of consequence and praised his talents, and were eager to become his pupils.

It was now late in the evening. It was time to pursue our attack. When we came down from the mountains, we pushed on in the plain. There four young men, peasants, as their clothes indicated, rushed to us at top speed shouting as loud as they could. No one had need of a diviner to see that they were in terror of the enemy, and that they were in a hurry to find refuge amongst our troops. Before they had had time to tell us properly that the enemy was there, we saw some wretched creatures on horseback, men who, to judge from the look of them, had been pushed into battle merely by hunger, and were quite ready to risk their lives in order to possess themselves of our goods.

The moment that they saw us, as we also saw them, before they were within javelin throw, they jumped from their horses, as is their way, to give battle on foot. I was of the opinion that we ought to do the same thing, for the ground did not lend itself to cavalry manœuvres. But our noble friend said he would not renounce the arts of horsemanship, and insisted on delivering a cavalry attack. What then? he pulls the horse's head sharply to the side, turns and flees away at full gallop, covers his horse with blood, gives it full rein, incites it with frequent application of spear, whip, and voice. I really do not know which of the two to admire the more, the horse or the rider, for if the horse galloped up hill and down hill and over rough country and smooth alike, cleared ditches and banks at a bound, the horseman, for his part, kept his

seat in the saddle firm and unshaken. I am sure the enemy thought it a fine sight, and were only too anxious to have many such. We could not give them this satisfaction, but you may imagine that we were disconcerted after having taken the promises of this hirsute beauty so seriously. So we drew up the line of battle to receive the enemy, if he should attack us. But we did not wish to take the initiative in the engagement ourselves. With such an example before us, the bravest of us distrusted his neighbour. Here nothing was a greater abomination than a head of hair, for the possessor seemed the most likely to betray us. However, the enemy did not seem in a hurry to open the attack any more than we were, for they drew up their line of battle and waited for us, in order to drive us back, in case we should take the offensive. On both sides the troops stood watching each other. Finally they drew off to the left and then we to the right, but at a walking pace and without haste, so that the retreat might not have the appearance of a flight.

Notwithstanding all these anxieties we tried to find out where in the world Joannes was. He had galloped without reining up as far as Bombaea, and he remained hidden in the cave there, like a field-mouse in its hole. Bombaea is a mountain full of caverns, where art and nature have combined to form an impregnable fortress. It has long been celebrated, and justly ; they often compare it to the subterranean vaults of Egypt. But to-day every one admits that there are no walls behind which one could be safer than at Bombaea, since even the most prudent of all men—I am too polite to say the most cowardly, the right word to use—has gone thither to hide himself, as to the surest refuge. The moment one enters this place, one is in a regular labyrinth, hard to get through, so that it by itself could provide places of refuge for Joannes.

I should be altogether lacking in sense, if I did not show myself very grateful to the inhabitants of Ptolemais, who consider me worthy of an honour to which I should never have dared to aspire. At

the same time I ought to examine, not the importance of the duties with which they desire to entrust me, but merely my own capacity for fulfilling them. To see oneself called to a vocation which is almost divine, when after all one is only a man, is a great source of joy, if one really deserves it. But if, on the other hand, one is very unworthy of it, the prospects of the future are sombre. It is by no means a recent fear of mine, but a very old one, the fear of winning honour from men at the price of sinning against God.¹

When I examine myself, I fail to find the capacity necessary to raise me to the sanctity of such a priesthood as this. I will now speak to you of the emotions of my soul: for I cannot speak to any one in preference to you who are so dear to me, and have been brought up with me. It is quite natural that you should share my anxieties, that you should watch with me during the night, and that by day we should search together whatever may bring me joy or turn sorrow away from me. Let me tell you, then, how my circumstances are, although you know in advance most of what I am going to say to you.

I took up a light burden, and up to this moment I think I have borne it well. It is, in a word, philosophy. Inasmuch as I have never fallen too far below the level of the duties which it imposed upon me, people have praised me for my work. And I am regarded as capable of better things still, by those who do not know how to estimate in what directions my talents lie. Now, if I frivolously accept the dignity of the position which has been offered to me, I fear I may fail in both causes, slighting the one, without at the same time raising myself to the high level of the other.² Consider

¹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 242c: 'Εμὲ γὰρ ἔθραξε μὲν τι καὶ πάλα λέγοντα τὸν λόγον, καὶ πᾶς ἔδυσωπόμην κατ' Ἴβυκον, μή τι παρὰ θεοῖς ἀμβλακῶν τιμὰν πρὸς ἀνθρώπων ἀμείψω. 'At the time I had a sort of misgiving, and, like Ibycus, I was troubled; I feared that I might be buying honour from men at the price of sinning against the gods.'

² Cf. Sidonius, Bk. III, Ep. vi, to Eutropius: 'What trouble I had in persuading you that a man might be a philosopher and a prefect at the same time! You were deep in the tenets of Plotinus, and the Platonic school had seduced you into a quietism unsuited to your age. I maintained that only a man without family obligations was free to profess a philosophy of that nature.'—Dalton's translation, vol. I, p. 72. I attach great importance to this passage as evidence that even half a century later Neo-

the situation. All my days are divided between study and recreation. In my hours of work, above all when I am occupied with divine matters, I withdraw into myself. In my leisure hours I give myself up to my friends. For you know that when I look up from my books, I like to enter into every sort of sport. I do not share in the political turn of mind, either by nature or in my pursuits. But the priest should be a man above human weaknesses. He should be a stranger to every sort of diversion, even as God Himself. All eyes are keeping watch on him to see that he justifies his mission. He is of little or no use unless he has made himself austere and unyielding towards any pleasure. In carrying out his holy office he should belong no longer to himself, but to all men. He is a teacher of the law, and must utter that which is approved by law. In addition to all this, he has as many calls upon him as all the rest of the world put together, for the affairs of all he alone must attend to, or incur the reproaches of all. Now, unless he has a great and noble soul, how can he sustain the weight of so many cares without his intellect being submerged? How can he keep the divine flame alive within him when such varied duties claim him on every side? I know well that there are such men. I have every admiration for their character, and I regard them as really divine men, whom intercourse with man's affairs does not separate from God. But I know myself also. I go down to the town, and from the town I come up again, always enveloped in thoughts that drag me down to earth, and covered with more stains than anybody could imagine. In a word, I have so many personal defilements of old date, that the slightest addition fills up my measure. My strength fails me. I have no strength and there is no health in me. I am not equal to confronting what is without me, and I am far from being able to bear the distress of my own

platonism was thought to be a cult which banished a man from a life of action or service to the state. The germ of monasticism is visible. The mystical philosophers did not, like Plato himself, point to a man's duty to take part in political life, if required to. The objections of Synesius to taking on himself the office of bishop would seem as much political as doctrinal; but the fact that he ultimately accepted the office, and the energy he displayed after his ordination, is suggestive of anything but quietism.

conscience.¹ If anybody asks me what my idea of a bishop is, I have no hesitation in saying explicitly that he ought to be spotless, more than spotless, in all things, he to whom is allotted the purification of others.

In writing to you, my brother, I have still another thing to say. You will not be by any means the only one to read this letter. In addressing it to you, I wish above all things to make known to every one what I feel, so that whatever happens hereafter, no one will have a right to accuse me before God or before man, nor, above all, before the venerable Theophilus.² In publishing my thoughts, and in giving myself up entirely to his decision, how can I be in the wrong? God himself, the law of the land, and the blessed hand of Theophilus himself have given me a wife. I, therefore, proclaim to all and call them to witness once for all that I will not be separated from her, nor shall I associate with her surreptitiously like an adulterer; for of these two acts, the one is impious, and the other is unlawful. I shall desire and pray to have many virtuous children. This is what I must inform the man upon whom depends my consecration. Let him learn this from his comrades Paul and Dionysius, for I understand that they have become his deputies by the will of the people.

There is one point, however, which is not new to Theophilus, but of which I must remind him. I must press my point here a little

¹ Speaking of Proclus and Synesius, von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff says, in reference to their desire to escape from this world: 'Plato once had the same kind of emotions, but he had Eros within his heart who made his soul to grow wings. These men, however, know that a saving hand must come down to them from above. They feel the load of their sinfulness, the Neoplatonist much more than the Christian. . . . For both, the longing is ever directed to the vision of the eternal beauty. This is an inheritance from Plato.'—*Die Hymnen des Proklos und Synesios*, p. 287.

² 'The strangest thing about this honest man is that there seems to have been no break, no conversion, nor any expression of confidence that by the magic force of baptism his sins would be forgiven, and a claim established to eternal life. . . . He never cast off his Hellenism; nor did he adopt Christianity suddenly, as something new. The historians of the Church tell us that he was baptized when he was made a bishop; consequently before that he was not a Christian. One gets the same impression in reading his great prose works.'—Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Hymnen des Proklos und Synesios*, p. 280.

more, for beside his difficulty all the others are as nothing. It is difficult, if not quite impossible, that convictions should be shaken, which have entered the soul through knowledge to the point of demonstration. Now you know that philosophy rejects many of those convictions which are cherished by the common people. For my own part, I can never persuade myself that the soul is of more recent origin than the body. Never would I admit that the world and the parts which make it up must perish. This resurrection,¹ which is an object of common belief, is nothing for me but a sacred and mysterious allegory, and I am far from sharing the views of the vulgar crowd thereon. The philosophic mind, albeit the discerner of truth, admits the employment of falsehood, for light is to truth what the eye is to the mind.² Just as the eye would be injured by excess of light, and just as darkness is more helpful to those of weak eyesight, even so do I consider that the false may be beneficial to the populace, and the truth injurious to those not strong enough to gaze steadfastly on the radiance of real being. If the laws of the priesthood that obtain with us permit these views to me, I can take over the holy office on condition that I may prosecute philosophy at home and spread legends abroad, so that if I teach no doctrine, at all events I undo no teaching, and allow men to remain in their already acquired convictions. But if anybody says to me that he must be under this influence, that the bishop must belong to the people in his opinions, I shall betray myself very quickly. What can there be in common between the ordinary man and philosophy? Divine truth should remain hidden, but the vulgar

¹ 'He explicitly denied the Resurrection, and the end of the world, and in spite of all this the church made him her bishop. At that time the Church cared more for metaphysics than for the evangel of Jesus, and as to the teachings of Jesus, they cared for them still less. It is true that Theophilus decided the question; Chrysostom would have acted differently. No doubt the decisive reason was that Synesius was a capable man, well suited to defend the threatened outposts. It was love of his country which induced him to join the Church himself. The Church as a social organization had certain powers and rights independently of any theology. As a social organization she was victorious; but her theology surrendered to Neoplatonism.'—Von Wilamowitz Moellendorff, *Die Hymnen des Proklos und Synesios*, p. 286.

² νοῦν (Hercher): Migne reads δῆμον.

need a different system. I shall never cease repeating that I think the wise man, to the extent that necessity allows, should not force his opinions upon others, nor allow others to force theirs upon him.

No, if I am called to the priesthood, I declare before God and man that I refuse to preach dogmas in which I do not believe. Truth is an attribute of God, and I wish in all things to be blameless before Him.¹ This one thing I will not dissimulate. I feel that I have a good deal of inclination for amusements. Even as a child, I was charged with a mania for arms and horses. I shall be grieved, indeed greatly shall I suffer at seeing my beloved dogs deprived of their hunting, and my bow eaten up by worms. Nevertheless I shall resign myself to this, if it is the will of God. Again, I hate all care; nevertheless, whatever it costs, I will endure lawsuits and quarrels, so long as I can fulfil this mission, heavy though it be, according to God's will; but never will I consent to conceal my beliefs, nor shall my opinions be at war with my tongue. I believe that I am pleasing God in thinking and speaking thus. I do not wish to give any one the opportunity of saying that I, an unknown man, grasped at the appointment. But let the beloved of God, the right reverend Theophilus, knowing the situation and giving me clear evidence that he understands it, decide on this issue concerning me. He will then either leave me by myself to lead my own life, and to philosophize, or he will not leave himself any grounds on which hereafter to sit in judgement over me, and to turn me out of the ranks of the priesthood.²

¹ So Sidonius, Bk. VII, Ep. xviii: 'I would have you know that while Christ is my defender I will ever suffer my judgement to be enslaved; . . . I myself strongly feel that the man who has to hide his real opinions cuts a very abject figure.'

Dalton's translation.

² 'One can only praise the Church for having tolerated this best of men as bishop, in spite of the fact that he made his own terms, even in the domain of Church doctrines. The Patriarch was that Theophilus who destroyed the Serapeion, and who had helped to achieve the fall of St. Chrysostom. He may have considered the philosophy and conscientious objections of Synesius as a sort of faddism, which was of course troublesome; but not only as a politician did he make his peace with him; he knew Synesius well enough to endorse him as a Christian. He had performed his marriage ceremony (Letter 105), and this was certainly not a mixed marriage.'—Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Hymnen des Proklos und Synesios*, p. 280.

In comparison with these truths, every opinion is insignificant, for I know well that Truth is dearest to God. I swear it by your sacred head, nay, better still, I swear by God the guardian of Truth, that I suffer. How can I fail to suffer, when I must, as it were, remove from one life to another? But if after those things have been made clear which I least desire to conceal, if the man who holds this power from Heaven persists in putting me in the hierarchy of bishops, I will submit to the inevitable, and I will accept the token as divine. For I reason thus, that if the emperor or some ill-fated Augustal had given an order, I should have been punished if I disobeyed, but that one must obey God with a willing heart. But even at the expense of God's not admitting me to his service, I must nevertheless place first my love for Truth, the most divine thing of all. And I must not slip into His service through ways most opposed to it—such as falsehood. See then that the scholastici¹ know well my sentiments, and that they inform Theophilus.

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To his Brother

45

I asked the young man who brought me some silphium from you, whether you had grown it yourself, or whether it was a present you had received, a share of which you were passing on to me. I learned from him that your own garden, which you take such care of, yielded you this excellent plant, together with every other sort of fruit. I am doubly rejoiced both on account of the beauty of this product, and on account of the reputation your estate enjoys. Go on, then, and make the most of such a fertile soil. Never tire of watering your beloved garden beds, and may they never weary of the labours of birth, so that you may have enough for your own use, and may send me whatever the seasons bring forth.

¹ Petavius remarks: 'He calls by the name Scholastici the men of learning and culture who gave up their time to letters in the Museum of Alexandria.'

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To his Brother

86

Really you are joking when you say that you want to prevent us from manufacturing arms while the enemy is holding the country, plundering everything, and slaughtering whole populations every day, and when we have no soldiers to be seen. Are you going to maintain then that private individuals are not authorized to bear arms, but are allowed to die? Evidently the government is full of wrath against those who attempt to save themselves. Very well, then, if I gain nothing else, at all events the laws shall be our masters instead of these destroyers. How high a value, think you, do I set on seeing peace flowering again, the tribunal in position, and the herald ordering silence! Yes, I desire only to die when my city has regained her former position.

108

To his Brother

85

I have already three hundred lances and as many scimitars.¹ As to two-edged swords, I never had more than ten, for they do not manufacture these very long iron weapons in our country. I think, however, the scimitars strike the bodies of our enemies a more terrible blow, and for that reason we shall use them. At a pinch we can have clubs, for our wild-olive trees are excellent. Some of our men carry also hatchets, ground on one side, in their belts. By battering the shields of our enemies with hatchets, we force them to fight on an equal footing with us, as we have no defensive armour. To-morrow, I think, the battle will take place. A band of the enemy met some of our scouts recently. It pursued them with vigour, and then, seeing that our people were too well mounted to be overtaken, the barbarians bade them announce to us tidings, cheerful indeed, if we shall no longer have to wander about looking

¹ Lapatz states (p. 273) on the authority of Graevius (*Thesaurus Antiquitatum Romanarum*, vol. vii, col. 1507) that there were not less than fifteen arms factories in the Eastern Empire. In addition to the state factories, permission was given to private individuals to fabricate arms.

for men hiding in the vast expanses of the country. For they told us that they would wait for us, that they wished to know what sort of men we were, who had not hesitated to leave our homes for so long a time, to go out to fight a warlike people, wandering tribes accustomed to live perpetually as we live only when we are making an expedition. I hope, therefore, that to-morrow by the aid of God I may vanquish the enemy, or that, not to say anything of ill omen, I shall vanquish him in a second attempt. I commend my children to you. You are their uncle, and ought to remember to show favour to them.

Just at present I have neither asses, mules, nor horses at hand, for all have gone to pasture. If I could have used them, I might have come to your beloved presence. I wanted very much to make the journey on foot, and I might perhaps have done it, but my relations are opposed to the project. They say that I should make those I met laugh at me. Evidently the people on the road, whoever they may be, are wisdom itself. They have so much sense that each one of them knows what becomes me better than I do myself. How many judges are imposed upon us by those who wish to make us live for appearances! In the end I gave in, not to warnings but to force. At the very moment when I was on the point of leaving, they would not let me, but seized me by the cloak. There is only one thing left for me to do, to despatch this letter in my place. I send you by it all my messages of affection. I ask you what are the exports from Ptolemais, I mean what news you are probably bringing from government head-quarters. Above all, tell me what I ought to think of the mysterious rumour that has come from the west, for you know that it makes a great difference to me whether it is true or not. If, then, you will write to me, and will give me all the details clearly stated, I will remain here. If not, you too will be reproaching me for having rushed to you.

You remember Chilas, I suppose ; I mean the one who kept a disorderly house. Probably few do not know him. He was quite celebrated in his walk of life. Andromache, the actress, who was one of the prettiest women of our time, was part of his company. After having passed his youth in this honourable career, he took it into his head that it would be a fitting sequel to his past life to shine in his old age by military achievements. So he has just come to us, after obtaining from the Emperor the command of our brave Marcomans. Now that they are so happy as to have a really fitting leader, it seems to us that these soldiers, who have always been brave enough, cannot fail to distinguish themselves by the most brilliant feats of arms.

Chilas, then, told Syrianus, when he met him,—you know the latter, of course, a doctor, who is one of my neighbours,—and Syrianus repeated to me, the state of the camp¹ of the Lord's anointed when he took his departure. Now as to other details that he gave me and to which I myself paid little attention at the moment, why should I trouble to mention them to you? There are, however, a few things which greatly tickle me and with which I would fain regale you in turn.

Our wonderful Joannes, in a word, is in the same position as ever. Fortune is showing herself as prodigal as possible to him, and is even seeking to surpass herself. He has the ear of the Emperor, and more important still, his good will to use for his own needs. Then, again, Antiochus does for him whatever he can, and Antiochus can do whatever he will. When I speak of Antiochus, do not confound him with Gratian's favourite, the sacred little man, honourable in character, but very ugly. The man I am talking about is young, has a paunch, was in great esteem with Narses the Persian, and even after Narses. Since then his fortune has only gone on

¹ Literally 'the divine camp', an ironical designation of the court.

increasing. Under these circumstances it is probable that he will be in command among us as long as is a raven's life, this most righteous general, the near relation of the one and the intimate of the other.

III

To Troilus

99

You ask me how many lines Dioscurus declaims every day? Fifty. He renders them without a mistake, without repeating himself, or stopping for a moment to recall them. Once he has commenced he goes forward without pausing, and silence marks the end of his declamation.

III2

To Troilus

18

Praise and Love cannot be explained by the same motives, and they are not regulated by the same faculties of the soul. Feeling determines love and hatred, whereas it is by the use of the critical and rational faculties that we praise and blame.

III3

To his Brother

23

How now? Shall we watch these foul fiends braving death so readily for the sake of others' property, that they may not have to give up to the owners what they may have plundered? And shall we be sparing of ourselves, and cling to our lives, when the question is one of defending our country, our altars, our laws and our property, all the possessions that we have enjoyed for so many years? At this rate we shall no longer look like men. For my part, just as I am, I must go against these barbarians. I must make trial to see what these enemies are who stop at nothing, what sort of people they are who dare to laugh the Romans to scorn, even though faring as they do now. A camel with the mange, says the proverb, can shoulder the burdens of many asses.

Quite apart from all this, I see that in such cases all those who do not think of anything except saving their lives, generally succumb,

whereas those who are ready to make the sacrifice escape danger. I shall be among these. I shall fight as if I were at the point of death, and I have no doubt at all that I shall survive. I am a Lacedaemonian by descent, and I remember the letter which the magistrates addressed to Leonidas, 'Let them fight as if doomed to die, and they will not die'.¹

114

To his Brother

46

Are you astonished that, while you are dwelling in a parched place like the country of the Phycuntes, you should shiver and poison should enter your blood? There would have been more cause for wonder had your body proved stronger than the heat there. Come to us, then, here. You could recover your health with God's help, once away from the infected air of the marshes, away from that salt, warm, and absolutely stagnant water, which one might call really dead. What charm can there be in lying down on the sand of the shore? That is the only pastime you have, for where could you wend your way? Here you can go under the shadow of a tree. If you are tired of one, you can go to another, even from one grove to another. You can step across a rivulet. How delightful is the zephyr which stirs the branches gently; there are the varied notes of birds, the colours of the flowers, the shrubs of the meadow; here the works of the husbandman, there nature's gifts. All things are fragrant with perfume, the aromas of a healthy soil. I will not praise the nymphs' grotto. It would need a Theocritus.² And there is something beyond all this.

¹ Lapatz (p. 270) cannot identify the quotation: 'Synésius est encore plus ancien par le cœur que par l'esprit...; il parle patrie... tombeaux et ancêtres comme on n'en parlait plus, avec... une magnificence de tendresse tout à fait surannée... Son patriotisme n'est pas moins classique que son goût.'—Lapatz, p. 271.

² Theocritus, vii, 136: τὸ δ' ἐγγύθεν ἱερὸν ὕδωρ
Νυμφῶν ἐξ ἀντροιο κατειβόμενον κελάρυσδε.

115

To the Doctor Theodorus

3

Scarcity of food is a good forced upon us. Some one else might even scoff at the idea, but that is not permitted to you, the admirer of Hippocrates, who defined want as the mother of health.

116

To Auxentius

113

'To the mountain, or the wave of the much-sounding sea'¹ Homer banishes the evils arising from contention, but Philosophy does not allow these even at the first to approach the soul. We are too weak to be philosophers, at least I am, but nevertheless we do not at all wish to conduct ourselves in a less worthy manner than those men of arms about whom the poem was written. I therefore borrow this other verse from Homer, who says somewhere:

Do you begin, for you are younger in years.²

May there be no conflict, but if it comes, may the youngest begin it, for some such thing as this was in Poseidon's mind when he made way for a god younger than himself to open the conflict. It is the part of the elder to be the leader in noble actions, and the noblest thing of all is concord. In my case, not merely am I older than you, but I am even already an old man. As Pherecydes says, you can see it in my skin.³ Therefore the matter of an apology devolves upon me. If the man who is first wrong, ought always to be the first to give in, and if you wish me to be that man, I grant this also for your sake. For since I first made a claim on you, it is right that I should at once accord you a favour which you desire.

117

To Heliodorus

55

Rumour says that you have great influence with the present prefect of Egypt, and in this speaks the truth. You are worthy of

¹ *Iliad*, vi. 347.

² *Iliad*, xxi. 439.

³ This phrase $\chi\rho\omega\delta\eta\lambda\omega\nu$ occurs in Diogenes Laertius, i. 118; also Synesius' *Panegyric on Baldness*, 21.

such an influence, for you use your power honourably. Here then is an excellent opportunity for displaying your kindness as well as your power. My dear Eusebius stands in need of both. Hear what he has to say, and you will learn that I am recommending to you one who is also an orator.

118

To Troilus

77

If you have heard of the late Maximinianus (he spent a great deal of time at court), you are certainly also aware that he was an honourable man. His son is my second cousin, and he will give you this letter. Many other people would perhaps pay deference to him on account of his good fortune, for he is one of those who have occupied a very important position. But Troilus is a philosopher; he will see in this young man his personal qualities alone, and he will value him for himself.

It is evident that you will be of great assistance to him in his present difficulties, for he is being attacked by the informers who unfortunately abound in Cyrene,

Unless you arm yourself with valour.¹

Whatever you shall persuade Anthemius or any one of his colleagues to say in defence of us and the truth, will be entirely your own act, and you will have the credit of all that takes place.

By taking up this case of one man only and one affair only, I beg that you will make an effort to rid us of these obnoxious wild beasts, for the success that attends those who make the first attempt will incline many to emulate them.

119

To Trypho

78

Whatever you do for Diogenes, of all that it is in your nature to accomplish, you will have done nothing new, but will be adding another deed to those already achieved by you. He is from Cyrene, and that city owes its continued existence to you. But you must benefit the citizens not only collectively but also individually.

¹ *Il.* ix. 231.

As to the matter in which Diogenes is implicated, and for which he stands in need of friends to come to his aid, he will tell you all about this in conversation much better than I could do in writing, for nothing could be more eloquent than the man who has suffered. Salute Marcian the philosopher for me; I mean the ex-governor of Paphlagonia. If he can do anything, and I fancy he can, I beg him to prevent my relative, my very own cousin, from becoming the victim of calumniating informers, who are the curse of the whole country. I commend him to your care with this letter. Treat him like a son, for if we are only two brothers by blood, Euoptius and I, nevertheless, with Diogenes, we become three by the links of affection.

120

To his Brother

20

When a sick man vomits with difficulty, the doctors prescribe tepid water for him to swallow, so as to make it easy for him to give up whatever is already in his stomach. For my part I desire to give you news which has recently been brought me from the other continent, in order that you may give it up to me in turn, but swollen in volume by everything else that you have learned yourself.¹

121

To Athanasius

115

Odysseus tried to persuade Polyphemus to let him leave his cave. 'I am a wizard,' he said, 'and I can give you timely help to win the

¹ There is ample evidence in Greek and Latin literature that such a simile would not offend ancient taste.

121. An uncertainty exists about the identity of the correspondent to whom this letter is addressed. In Migne's edition the name is Anastasius. Lapatz, following this reading, concludes that there were three Anastasii in Synesius' correspondence. 'The beauty of this remarkable letter . . . lies entirely in the wonderful freshness of its opening, and in its novel treatment, so amusing, so original, of a diplomatic battle between Ulysses and Polyphemus. Synesius has written nothing more classic. The late Comte de Marcelle was enthusiastic about it. "Where," he exclaims, "did he find this strange conversation . . . which Homer and Euripides were ignorant of, and which he narrates in a style so pure and refined?"'—Lapatz, 371.

heart of the sea nymph whom you are courting without success. I know enchantments, magic ties, and love spells that bind, which it is not likely that Galatea will resist even for a little. Only undertake to displace this door for me, or rather this rock, which seems to me actually a promontory. I will come back to you quicker than speech, after bringing the young girl to a state of submission. What do I say, a state of submission? Nay, I will by my incantations bring her hither in person, quite manageable through my many spells. She herself shall come to beg of you, to supplicate your favours. You will be able then to affect indifference, and to dissemble. Meantime there is only one thing that disquiets me. The smell of these fleeces will perhaps be offensive to this delicate nymph, accustomed to bathe many times a day. You would do well, then, to put everything in order, to sweep and wash out the place, and to fumigate your room, and still better, prepare garlands of ivy and convolvulus wherewith to bind your own head and that of your dearly beloved. But why are you so slow? What, you have not yet opened the door?’

In reply Polyphemus laughed his loudest. He clapped his hands with delight. Odysseus thought that he was beside himself with joy, excited by his hope of soon possessing his beloved, but the giant only chuckled him under the chin. ‘Noman,’ said he, ‘you have all the airs of a very shrewd little fellow and one experienced in affairs; but try some other scheme, for you will not escape from here.’ Odysseus, unjustly detained, then prepared to profit by his cunning, but as to you, a Cyclops in audacity and a Sisyphus¹ in your actions, it is justice which has pursued you, and law which has closed in upon you. May you never be able to mock at these! Even if you must be above the laws, may I never be the one to undo them, and to break down the doors of the prison; for if the government had been in the hands of the priests, it would have been their duty themselves to punish wrong-doing, and the blade of the

¹ See Letter 50.

executioner purifies the town as certainly as lustral water placed at the entrance of temples.

Thus we have heard of the fame of the men that have flourished before us.¹

It seemed good to them that the same man be charged to pray for the public good, and to act as the occasion demanded. For many years the Egyptians and the Hebrew race were governed by their priests. Later on the two callings were separated. One was appointed to the sphere of religion, the other to that of government. These latter were appointed to the post of action, and we to the office of prayer. If, as at present, the law forbids us to lend a hand to justice, or to put the worst criminal to death, how then could it ever allow us to take the side of a criminal against this same justice? But I do everything that comes within my sphere; I pray at home, and in the churches common to all, that justice shall rise above injustice and that the city may be purified from sin. This is equivalent to saying that the evil man should perish evilly, such a man as you and those that are like unto you. Let it be a sign to you what manner of man I should have been, if it had been permitted me to act in the matter, that since it is not so permitted me, I pronounce my curse upon you.

May all good things befall the priests of Axomis! While the soldiers were hiding themselves in the gorges of the mountains to take care of their precious lives, these priests called the peasants about them, and led them straight from the very church door against the enemy, and then they called upon God, and erected a trophy in the Myrtle Valley! This is a long ravine, deep and covered with forests. The barbarians, when they found no resistance in their way, rashly entered this dangerous defile, but they had to meet the valiant Faustus, the deacon of the church. This man, unarmed, when marching at the head of his troops, was himself the first to encounter a hoplite. He snatches up a stone, not to hurl it, but,

¹ *Il.* ix. 524.

holding it in his hand, and leaping upon him as with clenched fist he strikes the other violently on the temple. He knocks him down, strips him of his armour, and heaps many of the barbarians upon him. If any other man gave proof of courage in that battle, it is to Faustus that credit is due, both on account of his personal bravery, and for the orders which he gave at the critical moment.

For my part, I would willingly give a victor's wreath to all those who participated in the engagement, and I would have their names proclaimed by the voice of a herald, for they were the first to do brave deeds, and to show panicstricken souls that the barbarians are not Corybantes nor the demons who serve Rhea, but men like ourselves, who can be wounded and killed. And if only we are men in such a crisis as this, even the second prize will be honourable. Fate perchance might accord us even the first, if instead of being fifteen irregulars lurking in a valley to forage, we were able to give battle in the open, in regular warfare, mass against mass.

123

To Troilus

71

Even though there shall be utter forgetfulness of the dead
in Hades,

I shall remember there my so dear companion.¹

These lines were written by Homer, but as to the meaning of them, I know not whether they rightly apply to Achilles and Patroclus more than to me in relation to your beneficent and beloved person. I call God to witness, whom philosophy reveres, that I carry with me the image of your sweet and pious nature in my very heart. The wondrous echo of your words of wisdom resounds in my ears. When I came back from Egypt to my own city, and when I read all your letters of the two last years, I watered them with my tears. For I got no pleasure from the

¹ *Iliad*, xxii. 389 :

Εἰ δὲ θανόντων περ καταλήθοντ' εἰν Ἀΐδαο,
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ κείθι φίλου μεμνήσομ' ἑταίρου.

letters, out of the joy I always take in you, but rather sadness, recalling in them your living fellowship, and thinking of what a friend and father alike I am bereaved, although one who is in reality living. Willingly would I undergo more weighty struggles in behalf of my city, if only I might again have a pretext for leaving it. Shall I ever have the happiness of seeing you, O truest of fathers, and of embracing your sacred head, and of joining with that council that your word captivates? If this joy is given me, I shall prove by my own example that what the poets recount of Aeson the Thessalian is not after all a fable; they aver that he was twice endowed with youth, changing to a young man in his old age.

124

To the Philosopher (Hypatia)

24

Even though there shall be utter forgetfulness of the dead in Hades,¹

‘even there shall I remember thee,’ my dear Hypatia. I am encompassed by the sufferings of my city, and disgusted with her, for I daily see the enemy forces, and men slaughtered like victims on an altar. I am breathing an air tainted by the decay of dead bodies. I am waiting to undergo myself the same lot that has befallen so many others, for how can one keep any hope, when the sky is obscured by the shadow of birds of prey? Yet even under these conditions I love the country. Why then do I suffer? Because I am a Libyan, because I was born here, and it is here that I see the honoured tombs of my ancestors. On your account alone I think I should be capable of overlooking my city, and changing my abode, if ever I had the chance of doing so.

125

To his Brother

72

How sad it is to have only bad news to send when we write to each other, for, behold, the enemy has occupied Battia, he has

¹ See previous letter for quotation from the *Iliad*.

attacked Aprosylis, he has burnt the threshing-floors, ravaged the fields, sold the women into slavery; and as to the men, there was no quarter given. Formerly they used to take away the little boys alive, but now, I suppose, they do not consider themselves sufficient in number to guard the booty, and at the same time to meet all the necessities of war, in case any one should attack them. However, none of us shows any indignation. We remain helpless in our homes. We always wait for our soldiers to defend us, and a sorry help they are! And, in spite of this, we are never done talking about the pay we give them and the privileges which they enjoy in time of peace, as if this were the moment to impeach them, and not the moment to hurl back the barbarians. When shall we have done with our useless chatter? When shall we act seriously? Let us collect our peasants, the tillers of the soil, to advance upon the enemy, to assure the safety of our wives, of our children, of our country, and also, I may add, of our soldiers. It will be a fine thing in time of peace to go about saying that we took care of the troops, and that we saved them. I am dictating this letter almost from my horse. I myself enrolled companies and officers with the resources I had at my disposal. I am collecting a very considerable body at Asusamas also, and I have given the Dioestae word to meet me at Cleopatra. Once we are on the march, and when it is announced that a young army has collected round me, I hope that many more will join us of their own free will. They will come from every side, the best men to associate themselves with our glorious undertaking, and the worthless to get booty.

‘Alas! but why alas! Our lot is but mortal. The third of my sons, the only one who remained to me, has gone. I still, however, hold to the view that good and evil cannot be predicated of that which is not in our power. Or rather, this lesson which I learned long ago has now become a belief of a soul schooled in experience;

the blow therefore was of course more violent than my own suffering from it. The evil spirit whose business it is to hurt me arranged beforehand also that you, always so dear to me, should not be present. Oh best, thrice dear and most loyal of friends, may you come yet! I can bear witness that the noble Menelaus has a warm affection for you. For this reason I often spend a day with him, because he remembers you with something akin to veneration. Although he is very much occupied with the care of his soul, and has given himself up to-day to the guardians who are bringing him straight to Teuchira, he was well-disposed to the great Asclepiodotus, and he has continued to express gratitude to one to whom he owes so much. I am searching for a marble pot or cask to keep fresh water in, the larger the better. It shall be placed in the river Asclepius,¹ for beside it I am building the monastery, and getting ready the holy vases. May God bless my enterprise!

127

To his Brother

64

Beware of the asp and the toad, the snake and the Laodiceans. Beware of the mad dog too, and again of the Laodiceans.

After that most amiable and cultivated man, Pentadius, it is a Laodicean, Euthalius, who has obtained and holds the tablets which the state makes the token of the Egyptian government. You know the youth, for, if I am not mistaken, he entered the service about the same time as we did, and it is impossible that you did not notice him, on account of his character and his surname. You have heard of a certain Balantas (Purseman): this dignified appellation did not come to him by inheritance from his father, but rather was a nickname which he acquired for himself. Having been appointed governor of Lydia in the days of Rufinus, I think, he so plundered the Lydians that Rufinus in great wrath condemned him to a fine of fifteen pounds of gold. He furthermore gave orders to some of his soldiers, the bravest and most faithful, as

¹ There seems to be some play upon words here—Asclepiodotus, Asclepius.

he believed, of his servants, to go and collect this sum of money by force from him and to bring it back faithfully to his bank. What did our Sisyphus then? I shall not be so tactless as to spin out at great length the story which has been proclaimed on the house-tops. You have heard of course how he prepared a pair of purses much more like one another than the horses of Eumelus.¹ He filled one of these with bronze obols, the other with gold staters. Then he proceeded to conceal the first one, and to show the second. They counted up the gold, weighed it, and sealed it up with the public seal. Then he secretly effected an exchange of the two purses, and sent the obols instead of the staters. But those in charge had in an official despatch acknowledged the receipt of the gold, and promised to convey it to the bank.

‘Daphnis became henceforth the first of the shepherds.’² It was this which raised Euthalius to the height of fortune. Nobody could feel sorry for the state, because all laughed so much. Rather did all long to see one who had worked wonders as no other man in history. They were always inviting him. He went in procession through the cities as though he were a benefactor of the Romans, seated in a state chariot. The fellow is more talkative, I know, than the idlers who deliberate in the vestibule of the council-chamber, and this man will at once replace our dear Pentadius.

128

To a Bishop

145

*Expelled from his Bishopric because he was unwilling to
subscribe to the Arian dogma.*

You have recovered what you were, you have not lost it. For when one is struck off from the list of impiety, he is not at the same moment deprived of the throne of piety. Welcome this banishment

¹ *Iliad*, ii. 763: Ἴπποι . . .

τὰς Εὐμηλος ἔλαυνε, ποδώκεας, ὄρνιθας ὥς,
ὄτριχας, οἰέτεας, σταφύλη ἐπὶ νῶτον ἔϊσας.

² Theocritus, viii. 92: Κῆκ τούτω πρῶτος παρὰ ποιμέσι Δάφνις ἔγεντο.

of yours from Egypt, and believe that it was to you also that the prophet cried aloud 'What hast thou to do with the land of Egypt, that thou shouldest drink the water of Geon?'¹ It is a race which has for a long time been rebellious to God and an enemy of the Holy Fathers.

129

To Pylaemenes

60

In Plato we see Socrates already advanced in years seeking out his loves. 'Do not be surprized', he says to them, 'if after having given myself up to love with difficulty, I renounce it also with difficulty.' Methinks I have experienced the same thing in my relations with you, and ought to ask the same forgiveness, I who have passed a whole year, it would not be right or true to say, without writing to you, but in writing to you in vain, since all my letters have come back to me. To-day, therefore, I am sending all of them to you at the same time. In saying so much to you, I not only pay what might be called the arrears of the debt, but seek to contribute something else as well. And yet I swear in the name of Him who presides over our friendship that I came down to the sea for this very purpose, 'having given up the turf', and made a bargain with the oarsmen of Phycus whom I enjoined to give you my letters and . . . but why enumerate the presents which I sent to Pylaemenes, and which by an unfortunate voyage have been landed at Alexandria? I am very much disappointed on your account, but although Pylaemenes is the dearest to me of all my friends there, I swear by your beloved disposition that I am still more disappointed, because of many other friends, above all the admirable Proclus and Trypho, the only men from whom you sent me messages of greeting. I am sending your honour ten pieces of gold, and to our comrade Proclus, as noble Hesiod has prescribed, a third more than he lent me. Thus the matter stands. When abroad I accepted from Proclus sixty pieces of gold for the expenses of the voyage. On the bill he had written

¹ Cf. Jeremiah ii. 18. The Hebrew text is as follows: 'And now what hast thou to do in the way to Egypt, to drink the waters of Shihor?'

seventy, and I am sending him eighty. He would have had many more, if you had received the first letters I sent you, and if the ship had reached you with the cargo then sent. Now I have, by some turn of fortune, set out for Alexandria. I thought that we should arrive at your port, but contrary winds pushed us, without our noticing it, from Crete into the Egyptian Sea, which we safely reached, through with difficulty. Had it not been for this, what would have prevented you from feeding ostriches like hens? The venerable Proclus should give my agents the receipt, when he has received the eighty pieces of gold, and get my friend Troilus to send me quickly the books that you have given him; namely Nicostratus and Alexander of Aphrodisias.¹ If through your kindness those who are soon coming to take over our government show any friendship for us, you will for your part have done for us as much good to philosophy as, according to Plato, contempt for it has done harm.

130

To Simplicius

75

When you asked Cerialis to bring me your congratulations, you did him this good service, that you kept me in ignorance during five days as to what a contemptible man he is, for our cities had some hopes of one whom Simplicius deemed not unworthy of his acquaintance; but now he has made haste to dishonour, not you, for may your reputation never depend on any other man's! but himself, his mission, and in a word the affairs of the Romans. A venal fellow he is, and cheap at that: he takes no account of public opinion, is unfit for war and a real nuisance during peace, a peace which has brought him little profit, for it did not take him long to sow trouble and discord everywhere. As if the possessions

¹ Aphrodisias in Caria was the birth-place of the celebrated commentator on Aristotle. He lived about A. D. 200. About half his voluminous works were edited and translated into Latin at the Revival of Learning. A complete list of such of his Greek works as have been printed will be found in the new edition of Liddell and Scott (1925) p. xiv f. Nicostratus, the youngest of the sons of Aristophanes, was a comic poet. His plays belonged to the Middle and the New Comedy.

of soldiers belong rightfully to the general, he takes away whatever they have, and gives them in return exemption from service, and allows them to go freely, wherever they hope to find anything to live on. After having behaved to the inhabitants of the country in this manner (for as to the foreigners, it was impossible to levy money upon them), he proceeded to extract money from their cities by conducting troops there and moving them, not where there was the greatest military advantage, but where there was most plunder. Burdened by this billeting of troops upon them, the cities paid in gold.

This was soon known to the Macetae; these half-barbarous people told the story to the barbarians themselves and these latter

Came countless like the leaves and flowers in spring.¹

Alas! for the young men we have lost. Alas! for our crops which we hoped for in vain! We have planted our fields for the fires lit by our enemies. Our wealth for the most of us was our cattle, our herds of camels and of horses which grazed on the prairie. All are lost, all have been driven away. I feel that I am not master of my grief, but forgive me. I write to you shut up behind ramparts and besieged. Often in an hour I see torches gleaming, I am lighting some myself, and raising them as signals to others. But those hunts of yore which drew us on so far, and in which we rejoiced formerly in perfect safety, thanks, above all, to you, all these have gone. It is with a groan that we call to mind 'those young years, that mind, and those thoughts'. To-day we suffer from entire lack of horses, the country is held by the enemy, and I, placed as a sentinel between two towers, am struggling against sleep.

To my lance I owe my bread,
To my lance I owe my wine (Ismarian),
Leaning on my lance I drink.²

I do not know if it was more true for Archilochus than for me.

¹ *Odyssey*, ix. 51 :

² ἤλθον ἔπειθ' ὅσα φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα γίγνεται ὥρη.

² Archilochus, fr. 2 (63) ed. Bergk-Hiller (Leipzig, 1897).

May the wretched Cerialis perish wretchedly, if he has not already perished, before these my curses. He richly deserved to become a victim of that last storm, he, who at the sight of the dangers into which he had thrown his province, for once in his life lost faith in earth itself. He embarked his gold on double-sailed merchantmen and he is tossing about on the high seas. A little ship is carrying us letters from him enjoining us to do exactly such things as we are doing now, namely, to keep within the walls, not to attempt any sortie from the trenches, not to give combat to an enemy who is unconquerable. If we do not obey him, he protests that he will not answer for the consequences. Then again he advises us to establish four watches in the night, as if our hopes lay in depriving ourselves of sleep. He seems to be wise indeed in such matters, like a man who is accustomed to misfortune. Nevertheless, he took very good care not to share our troubles. Instead of being upon the ramparts, like me, Synesius the philosopher, the general keeps himself close to the oar-blade.

If you really wish to have the poems you asked me for, I must tell you that I see nothing therein felicitous, except the subject. Pray then with the Cyreneans for a slight respite from war. In our present state we cannot take our books from their cases.

131

To Pylaemenes

79

Know well that the definitions of geometry are infallibly true. Moreover, the other branches of knowledge are very proud when they are able, for their demonstrations, to borrow something, however slight, from geometry. Now there is a certain principle, of course, that two things which are equal to a third thing are equal to each other. I am bound to you by the link of association, and to the wonderful Diogenes by temperament also. Both of you are friends of the one man. You must then be united to one another, even as you are united to the middle link, myself. I attach you, therefore, the one to the other by this letter, in virtue of which the celebrated Diogenes will also give himself up to your honour's friendship, and

at the same time, I am sure, he will take in return my own Pylaemenes. In calling you my own, I think I am saying nothing of which we can either of us be ashamed. Thanks to you he will have, as friends, all others who love me and also such as are useful, owing to their power. It would be doing you an injustice to doubt this. More than any one at any time he stands in need of friends to come to his assistance.

Well, in a few words, this is his trouble. Diogenes is a loyal young man, noble and full of gentleness and courage at once, just such a man as Plato would have wished to make a guardian of in his state.¹ Further, he saw military service while still a stripling. When he had passed out of youth he was given the command of the troops in our country, and in exposing himself to dangers he incurred the obloquy of the spectators. For so do the citizens regard whatever is successful. But this man rose superior to envy. Another might have much to say on this subject, but we resemble each other too much, he and I, in our attitude towards praising and being praised, for further comment. In a word, he has conquered the enemies of his city by his feats of arms, and all evil-minded men in it by his virtue. Although stepping into power while still young, he was not ashamed of his relationship with a philosopher.

Diogenes, such as I describe him to you, has some troublesome affairs to deal with, precisely because he is a virtuous man, for every honest man is a gold-mine for scoundrels, and the wicked get their revenues from the other part of mankind.

An informer is trying to extort money from Diogenes, and now, having failed in that attempt, he has brought an action against him in the courts. As he has not succeeded by this means in getting any of his ill-founded claims, for we have the law upon our side, he has turned to another plan; he is changing the civil suit into a criminal charge by trying to impute to him a misdemeanour,

¹ Plato, *Republic* ii. 15, p. 375 B: Οἷον δεῖ τὸν φύλακα εἶναι, δῆλα . . . ὅτι γε θυμοειδῆ . . . δεῖ γὰρ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς οἰκείους πρῶτος αὐτοὺς εἶναι, πρὸς δὲ τοῖς πολεμίοις χαλεπούς. 'The guardian should be spirited in soul . . . these should be gentle to their friends, harsh to their enemies.'

committed before the accused was born. Diogenes will not wait to be brought before justice, for we must not give way to a murderous blackmailer, nor can he abandon to this fellow the possessions he has inherited from his fathers and from his ancestors, with the appearance of disgrace in addition. Diogenes, therefore, is in want of sincere, incorruptible, able friends like yourself, and he shall have, by the grace of God, yourself through me, and the friends who are mine and yours through you. In doing a service to Diogenes every one will acquire a claim to my personal gratitude.

132

To his Brother

74

We may allow that there are worse things than women shrieking, beating their breasts, or tearing their hair when they see the enemy or when his coming is announced to them. For all that, Plato¹ regards it as scandalous that they should not be willing to stand up like hens against the bravest in the defence of their offspring, and that they should give to the race of man the reputation of being the most cowardly of all animals. However this may be, that you should commit the same fault as these women, that you should be terrified out of your wits in the night, that you should get out of bed, and go about shouting that the barbarian is already at the gate of the fortress; I ask, is this to be endured any longer? And yet some one has told me some such story about you. It would seem like a transformation to be at one moment my brother and at another a coward. For my part, at the moment of dawn I am off on horseback, I am scouting as far out as possible, searching busily with eyes and ears for any signs of these cattle-lifters, for I cannot give the name of enemy to looters and foot-pads. I wish I could find stronger phrases still with which to characterize them.

They never hold their ground against determined adversaries, and they only attack the timid, whom they slaughter like victims for

¹ *Laws*, 814 A: Πολλή που κακία πολιτείας οὕτως αἰσχυρῶς τὰς γυναῖκας εἶναι τετραμμένας ὥς μηδὲ ὥσπερ ὄρνιθας περὶ τέκνων μαχομένας . . . ἐθέλειν ἀποθνήσκειν, κ.τ.λ. ' . . . great would be the disgrace to the state, if the women had been so miserably trained that they could not fight for their young, as birds will, . . . and die, &c.'—Jowett.

sacrifice, and then strip. At night, with an escort of young men, I patrol the hill and I give the women an opportunity of sleeping without fear, for they know that there are those who are watching over them. Moreover I have with me some of the corps of the Balagritae.¹ Before Cerialis had taken over the command of the province, these men were mounted bowmen; but when he entered upon his functions, their horses were sold and they became only archers, but even as infantry they are useful to me. We need archery in defence of our wells and of the river, as water is entirely lacking in the interior of our lines. Now what prevents us from going through our siege in flute-playing and in festal gatherings? It is that we must either conquer now by fighting, or perish in hand-to-hand struggle with the enemy, unless we wish to die of thirst, and what could be more pitiable than this? We must, therefore, of necessity be brave men. Do you, on your side, take heart and rally the others. As to that pair of voracious horses which you are feeding only for the tax-collector, give orders to have them brought to you.

Particularly in moments like these a horse is no useless possession. For whether it is scouting, observing the enemy, or carrying messages in the shortest time—all this a horse can do so easily. If you are in want of archers, send for them and they will come. As to the Phycuntian oarsmen, I can no more count upon them to do their duty as soldiers than I can count on my gardeners. I seek only a small number of men, but they must not be false to their manhood. If I can find such, by God's grace be it said, I shall have courage. If I am called upon to die, here lies the advantage of philosophy, not to regard it as a terrible thing to retire from this poor envelope² of the flesh. But whether I shall be tearless in presence of my wife and child, of this I dare give no pledge; would that Philosophy were so powerful! But may I never have to make trial of her, never, O saviour, never, O guardian of freedom!

¹ Balagrae was west of Cyrene.

² For the metaphor, compare Mayor on Tertullian, *Apology*, c. 50, p. 144, ll. 1-3.

Just the other day, during the recent consulship of Aristaenetus¹ and of—I don't know the name of his colleague—I received a letter sealed with your seal, and signed with your sacred name. But I conjecture it was a very old one, for it was worm-eaten, and the words for the most part were illegible. I wish very much that you would not content yourself with merely sending me one letter a year, as a sort of tribute, and that you would not take our friend Syrus for your only postman. In this way nothing comes to me in its pristine freshness, everything seems stale. Do, therefore, as I do—no messenger of the Court changes his horses and leaves our city, without his bag being made heavier by some letter of mine addressed to your eloquent self. Whether all or only some of them give you my letters, may those who put them in your hands be ever blest! they are excellent men. But if they do otherwise, you will then be the wiser, inasmuch as you will not put faith in faithless men. But that I may not uselessly weary my secretary in dictating letters to him that you will never receive, I should like to be sure about this.

I shall in that case arrange things differently in future, and entrust them to Peter alone. I think Peter will bring on this letter through the agency of the sacred hand, for I am sending it from Pentapolis to our common teacher.² She will choose the man by whom she wishes it to be conveyed, and her choice, I am sure, will fall upon the most trusted messenger. We do not know, my dearest and best friend, if we shall ever have a chance of conversing together again. The cowardice of our generals has delivered up our country

¹ The year was 404 or 405. The other consul was the Emperor Honorius. *ἐναγχος* is ambiguous, and might be taken either as = 'just appointed', or = 'the most recent' (last year's).

² Doubtless Hypatia.

to the enemy without a single battle; there are no survivors except those of us who have seized fortified places. Those who have been captured in the plains have been butchered like victims for sacrifice. We are now afraid of a prolonged siege, lest it should compel most of the fortresses to surrender to thirst. This is the reason why I did not answer your counter-charges on the subject of the presents. I had no leisure, for I was taken up with a machine which I am constructing, that we may hurl long-distance missiles from the turrets, stones of really substantial weight. I shall leave you, however, entirely at liberty to send me gifts, for of course Synesius must yield to Olympius, but they must not be gifts of a luxurious sort. I disapproved of the luxury of the quarters assigned to the company. Send me, then, things that are useful for soldiers, such as bows and arrows, above all arrows with heads attached to them. As far as the bows are concerned, I can at a pinch buy them elsewhere, or repair those which I have already, but it is not easy to procure arrows, I mean really good ones. The Egyptian arrows that we have bulge at the knots and sink in between the knots, so that they deviate from their right course. They are like men starting in a foot-race, who from the very start are hampered and stumble; but those which are manufactured in your country are long and are deftly turned on the pattern of a single cylinder; and this means everything for the straight course of their flight. Now this is what you ought to send me, and at the same time some serviceable bits for my horses. That Italian horse whose praises you set forth in such beautiful language, I would have very gladly seen, if he will give us, as you promise, some excellent colts. However, at the end of your letter, in a postscript, I read that you were obliged to leave him at Seleucia, because the captain of your vessel refused to embark such a cargo on account of the bad weather; but as I recognize neither a style resembling your own, nor your hand, nor the precision of your script, I think I ought to warn you of the fact. It would be absurd if such a fine horse were preserved neither for you nor for me.

I have received the letter in which you again accuse Fortune of treating you no better than in the past. You are wrong, dearest of friends, for it is not meet to blame her, but rather to console yourself. In your difficulties you can always come to me; you will be in the house of a brother. We are not rich, my good friend, but all we possess is quite sufficient for Pylaemenes and for me. If only we dwelt together, perhaps we should even be wealthy. Other men with resources such as mine enjoy great comfort, but I am a bad steward. In the meantime my patrimony still holds out against absolute neglect, and is well able to support a philosopher. Do not imagine that chance carries foresight with it. Well, then, do exactly as I tell you, unless meantime you have found fortune more favourable, and unless you again plan to raise the prostrate Heraclea. I am not writing to my habitual correspondents, on account of the difficulties of these times, but I have written quite lately to all of them. I gave Diogenes a whole packet of letters. Diogenes is my cousin; he undoubtedly went in search of you, and if he had succeeded in finding you, the packet ought to have been given to you by this time, for it bears your name. If you have not yet received it, ask the captain to point out the young man to you, and when you have obtained the letters, take upon yourself the care of distributing them. There are people whom I particularly ask you to salute in my name, the aged Proclus, Trypho, who has governed our province, and Simplicius, a most worthy man, an excellent magistrate, and a friend of mine. When you have brought him the letter, take advantage of the opportunity to make his acquaintance, for it is a beautiful thing to pass one's time with a poet-soldier. We caught ostriches in the days when peace allowed us the pleasure of hunting, but we have not been able to send them to sea owing to the enemies' armaments, nor could we put upon our ships any part of the goods lying on the wharves. There is only a cargo of wine, and as to olive-oil, by your noble

head, they have not succeeded in embarking a single measure, so far as I know. Accept, then, so many pints of wine as I offer you. In order to get it, you have only to send Julius the order, which I append to this letter for fear that it may go astray. I also wrote to the aged Proclus sending a like consignment.

Let him receive the letter by you, and the wine by Julius. We have prepared delicate¹ presents for the golden Trypho (I must make use even now of the cold wit of a Gorgias), a great deal of silphium juice (even you know of the silphium of Battus), and the best saffron, for this also is a worthy product of Cyrene. However, it is impossible at the present moment to send all this. We would put it on board another vessel when we send the ostriches with it, and the olive-oil by itself.

135

To his Brother

14

Poemenius, who will give you this letter, was sent to us by Artabazaces, the man who was recently our Governor, to take charge of all the property which he had acquired in these parts. In the performance of this task Poemenius showed himself gentle and considerate. And yet would any other man have so used such an opportunity? No one in Libya groaned under the power of Poemenius during that time, and the best proof of this is the general regret that his departure has caused. You will oblige me by giving him a warm reception, and by showing him all the consideration that his rectitude deserves.

136

To his Brother

13

I hope that I may profit as much as you desire from my residence at Athens. It seems to me that I have already grown more than a palm and a finger's length in wisdom, and I can give you at once a proof of the progress I have made. Well, it is from Anagyrus that I am writing to you; and I have visited Sphettus, Thria,

¹ The pun between *τροφῶντα* and *Τρύφωνι* probably cannot be represented in English.

Cephisia, and Phalerum. But may the accursed ship-captain perish who brought me here! Athens has no longer anything sublime except the country's famous names. Just as in the case of a victim burnt in the sacrificial fire, there remains nothing but the skin to help us to reconstruct a creature which was once alive—so ever since philosophy left these precincts, there is nothing for the tourist to admire except the Academy, the Lyceum, and, by Zeus, the Decorated Porch which has given its name to the philosophy of Chrysippus. This is no longer Decorated, for the proconsul has taken away the panels on which Polygnotus of Thasos had displayed his skill.

To-day Egypt has received and cherishes the fruitful wisdom of Hypatia. Athens was aforetime the dwelling-place of the wise: to-day the bee-keepers alone bring it honour. Such is the case of that pair of sophists in Plutarch who draw the young people to the lecture room—not by the fame of their eloquence, but by pots of honey from Hymettus.

137

*To Herculian*¹

4

If Homer has told us that it was an advantage to Odysseus in his wandering that he saw the towns and became acquainted with the mind of many nations,² and although the people whom he visited were not cultured, but merely Laestrygonians and Cyclopes, how wondrously then would poetry have sung of our voyage, a voyage in which it was granted to you and me to experience marvellous things, the bare recital of which had seemed to us incredible! We have seen with our eyes, we have heard with

¹ Herculian was a fellow student and an intimate friend of Synesius. It was to Herculian that he confided many of his ideas on philosophy which he did not wish published to the world at large. He apparently went to Alexandria to attend lectures, and remained there after Synesius had left. He seems to have felt very keenly the pain of separation from his friend, who blames him in Letter 139 for allowing himself to be distressed by circumstances which are inevitable in life, and outside of all control. In Letter 143 he invites Herculian to visit him.

² *Odyssey*, i. 3: Πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἶδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω.

our ears the lady who legitimately presides¹ over the mysteries of philosophy. And if human interests join those who share them in a bond of union, so a divine law demands of us who are united in mind, which is the best part of us, to honour each other's qualities. For my part, after having rejoiced so much in your bodily presence with me, it seems to me as if I still saw you, although now you are absent from me, for memory furnishes me with the image that your disposition produces within me. The wondrously sweet echo of your sacred words resounds in my ears.² If you do not feel all that I feel, you do me wrong indeed; but if you do feel all this, it is simple enough. You are only in that case repaying the debt of friendship. Whenever my thoughts go back to our association in the study of philosophy, and to that philosophy at which we have both laboriously toiled, then under the influence of reasoning I attribute our meeting to God the ruler. For it must needs be from no less than a divine cause that I, Synesius, thus readily disclosed myself and all that is mine to a man with whom I had hardly conversed; I, the least inclined to vulgarize such subjects, whose contact with men is frequent, but whose conversation with them is confined to subjects of general interest, and who hold philosophy to be the most unutterable amongst unutterable things. Now, when the being appeared to whom I betrayed matters that were not to be found out by inquiry until that moment, I had quite forgotten the cunning art of Proteus; and this was naught else than to live in the midst of men, not as a god, but as a citizen. Since this happened without any forethought on my part, but quite unrehearsed, I account God the prime mover in the unexpected event. Therefore we will beg Him to conduct to a prosperous end what He has begun, and to grant us to study philosophy, together if possible, but if not, in any case to study philosophy. I am in the throes of thought, longing to pour over my letter certain arguments that are in my mind, concerning that subject we were discussing, but I shall not do anything of the sort. If God

¹ Hypatia.

² The language here is very close to that of letter 123.

permit, it may befall you to discuss the matter with us, and with many who have better knowledge! I cannot believe that it is a good thing to confide secrets of this sort to paper, for it is not the business of a letter to hold its peace; its nature is to speak to the first comer. Good-bye then, study philosophy, and go on digging up the eye that is buried within us. For an upright life, which I consider the beginning of wisdom, has been enjoined upon us by the wise men of old. The inspired voice says that it is not right for the unpurified to handle that which is pure; but the masses think that uprightness of life does not exist for the end of wisdom, but stands by itself, and is itself the perfection of man, and that the way is not a way merely, but the goal itself at which we must aim. In this view they are mistaken. An unreasoning self-control and an abstinence from eating of meat, have been given to many unreasoning creatures by nature. We do not commend a raven or any other creature that has discovered a natural virtue, because they are devoid of reasoning power. To live according to reason is the end of man. Let us pursue that life; let us ask God to turn our thoughts to divine things, and let us ourselves, as much as is possible for us, gather wisdom from all sides.

138

To Herculan

5

I once heard one of our brilliant speakers praising the practice of letter-writing; and this very theme the sophist developed with a wonderful flow of eloquence. He hymned an encomium on it for various reasons, but particularly because of the letter's power to be a solace for unhappy loves, affording as it does in bodily absence the illusion of actual presence, for this missive seems itself to converse, thus fulfilling the soul's desire. In this way he celebrated the inventor of letters, and came to the conclusion that they were not a gift from any man but one from God to men. For my part I enjoy this sacred gift of God, and to whomsoever I needs must talk, if I cannot speak to him, at all events I can write, and this I often long to do. I then rejoice in those I love,

and am present with them to the best of my power. Now as to you, if it may be said without bitterness, you seem to me to have changed your character along with your abode. If you do not abandon this way of separating yourself from those who have loved you without guile or affectation, you are like the swallow who comes to live, so to speak, in the friendship of men with cries of joy, and who later on leaves us in silence. So far all this is addressed to the man, and these are a man's complaints. But if through philosophy you have united what up to this moment has been separated, and if the beautiful is lovable, and is one thing and the same, as you have heard the poet say;¹ in that case we shall no longer attribute your silence to disdain, but will share your philosopher's joy, and will exhort you to keep clear of meanness, so that by union with what is strongest in your own nature, you may unite with what is strongest in ours. May you be such a man as this, O best of men, and thrice longed-for of brothers!

139

To Herculan

6

If there is such a sting of persuasion in letters, if even without your living sympathy and charm the images of your character cast such a spell over those who read, to converse with you face to face would be irresistible indeed. For my part, as long as I was in your company, you charmed me by the sweet siren of your voice. Nevertheless, I should not be ashamed to tell you the truth that a pleasure still sweeter would be our second meeting, for the perception of a present good cannot compare with that of an absent good, to him who has once made trial. Moreover, the continuity of the enjoyment steals away the sensation of joy, but he

¹ I accept the conjecture of Petavius that a word, probably 'poet' (ποιητοῦ) has been lost here. Crawford refers us to Theognis, *Paraenesis* 17:

Ὅτι καλόν, φίλον ἐστὶ τὸ δ' οὐ καλὸν οὐ φίλον ἐστι
τοῦτ' ἔπος ἀθανάτων ἦλθε διὰ στομάτων.

'Whatever is fair is to be prized, and what is not fair is not to be prized; this precept has come from the lips of the immortals' (i. e. the Muses).

who has been separated even a little while from pleasures, retains a proportionately poignant memory of those things which he actually lacks. May you come to me, friend who are so dear to me! Let us take up again our discourses on philosophy, and build up something worthy of our beginnings, that from perfect things a perfect beauty may be manifest, not one that is marred. But if we are fated to remain deprived of each other's company, which God forbid, the loss will certainly be mine alone, for where you are, education flourishes amongst a multitude of men, and there will be with you many like Synesius and many better than he. My city is dear to me because it is my city, but it has become, I know not how, insensible to philosophy. It is therefore not without apprehension that I feel myself alone and without help in the absence of one with whom to share my philosophic frenzy. But even if we should admit that there are some such,

How could I forget Odysseus equal unto the Gods!¹

Leaving your sacred soul, against what other piece of wood could I rub myself, and bring forth a luminous child of reason? Who will be so able by every contrivance powerfully to call forth a hidden spark which loves to conceal itself, to ignite it, and reveal a brilliant flame? United or separated, may God be always with us! If God is present, there is a path in every pathless place. Farewell; philosophize, and raise the divine within you to the first-born divine. For it is a beautiful thing that my whole letter should say from me to your honoured self what Plotinus, the story goes, said to those present as he released his soul from its body.²

140

To Herculan

31

Of loves there are some which have earthly and human origins. These are detestable and ephemeral, measured by the presence of the object alone, and even then with difficulty. But there are others over which a Divinity presides, and, according to the divine utterance of Plato, he fuses those who love one another by his art, so that from being two they become one.³ They triumph both

¹ Hom. *Od.* i. 65.² Cf. Porphy. *vit. Plotin.*³ See ep. 152.

over time and place. Nothing can prevent souls who seek each other from drawing near to each other by secret paths and becoming locked together. Now our friendship ought to be of this character, if we are not going to shame our training in philosophy. Do not let us be such men as simply rejoice in the senses, and never allow the soul to enter unless the body knocks at the door.

Why do you lament and drench your letters with your tears? If it is from pity for me, because I have not yet become a philosopher, even although I have taken the outward appearance and the name of one, then I recognize that your lament is well founded; but if you are only complaining of the unfeeling fate which has separated us—for it is that which I think your letters attempt to express—it is womanish or childish to love those things through which the demon is able to rob us of the fruits of our plans. For my part, I should have imagined that Herculian, that lofty spirit, with his eyes fixed upon Heaven, and given over completely to the contemplation of real being and of the origin of mortal things, would have long ago passed beyond the virtues which are deflected, and whose function is to regulate this world below. Again, according to this conception of you, I put at the end of my letter 'Be Wise' instead of 'Good-bye', or 'Farewell', for such a formula is too common. For the mind that presides over actions is one of an inferior order, and it is not that which I supposed was buried in you.

I have treated this whole question at considerable length in two of my previous letters, but those to whom I had entrusted them have never given them to you. I am, therefore, writing you to-day a fifth letter, and I hope this time not in vain. In the first place it will not be in vain, if this letter shall reach you; in the next place, and this is still more important, if it shall counsel, teach, and persuade you to exchange strength of body for manliness of soul. I am speaking, not of that manliness which springs from the first and earthly quaternion of the virtues, but of the proportionate manliness amongst the virtues of the third and fourth degree.¹ You will enter into full possession of this force, when you learn to wonder at nothing

¹ The meaning of the last part of the sentence is obscure.

here below. If you do not yet understand the difference which I am trying to establish between the primal and the least virtues, still, if you come to the point of no longer lamenting about anything, and of feeling only a just contempt for everything here below, let this be a standard for you, and a means of testing your attainment of the first things, that I also may again write in my letters to you—‘be wise in many things’. May you continue in good health—may philosophy keep you in calm cheerfulness, O admirable master! If philosophy knows how to give the first place to absence of emotion itself, and if the intermediary states consist in the moderate experience of passion, where on earth shall we place the extreme of passion and the extreme of humiliation? Shall we not place them outside of philosophy, of which we prayed earnestly that you might be the priest? Not that, at all events, most dear to me of all men! Show yourself a more manly friend to us. My whole household has charged me to salute you in their behalf. Accept then the salutations of all: each one of them all but pours out his heart in the final greetings. And do you yourself on our behalf salute the light cavalry, I beg you.

141

To Herculian

32

Do not be surprised that I am giving two letters for you to the same messenger. First consider yourself undergoing punishment for your unseasonable reproach, and replenish yourself with my garrulity; in the next place, I wish my second missive to fulfil another object. I beg you to give me back the brief composition in iambics, in which the author holds converse with his own soul. I thought that I should be able to piece this together again from memory, but now there seems every chance of its not resembling the one in question at all, and of my using my invention rather than my memory in attempting to write it down. Perhaps it would be worse or perhaps better, but one should not in any case bring the same offspring twice into the world, when one may have the thing that has already been born. Send me back, then, a copy of

the quatrain, in the name of the very soul that the sheet of paper seeks to adorn. But do this as quickly and as safely as possible, that is to say, by one of those who are certain to deliver it, for in erring in either way you will accomplish nothing at all. If you are slow in sending it, it will no longer find me here; and the same thing will happen if you give it to one who will not deliver it at all.

On reading over your letter, I recognize Odysseus at once. Many traits of character therein recall that hero to my memory, but I do not recognize Proteus.¹ It is not improbable that a man like you might approach the demigods; but for my part, although wise in a way, although knowing myself, in accordance with the Delphic injunction, I condemn the feebleness of my own character, and I disclaim an affinity with heroes. My whole ambition would be rather to imitate their taciturnity, the very thing which, like the Spartan Menelaus, you have muddled; so well indeed that you seem to belong no longer to Odysseus alone, but to a pair of heroes. But enough of all this. While you blame your own lack of taste for writing, you have no right to ask me for an abundance of letters that would only weary you. I have therefore reduced the length of this one, so that you may not give yourself more trouble by reading more. Take care of your health and live on in cheerfulness. Work at philosophy, my admirable friend, and it will conduct you to the divine. Give my regards to the noble Count; we have not allowed ourselves a personal interview with him; for the words of the poem are:

Commence, you are the younger.

Thus he allows the younger the right to begin war and strife, the elder benevolence. But the man is honoured by me and is in every way worthy, for he alone of our time has conducted to the same goal education and military science, once walled off from

¹ *Odyssey*, iv. 385 ff.

each other by formidable barriers, and has discovered some ancient affinity in these callings. Proud as no other soldier, he turns away from that arrogance that dwells on the border of pride. Such a man as this I love, even if I do not write to him, and if I do not court him, I honour him.

143

To Herculan

49

You have not kept your promise, my dear friend, the promise which you made me that you would not reveal those things which ought to remain hidden. I have just listened to people who have come from you. They remembered some of your expressions, and they begged me to reveal the meaning to them. But according to my custom I did not pretend to them that I understood the writings in question, nor did I say that I knew them. You no longer need any warning from me, my dear Herculan, for it would not be enough to convince you. Rather look up the letter which Lysis the Pythagorean addressed to Hipparchus, and when you have found it, oblige me by reading it frequently. Perhaps you will then experience a complete change of mind in regard to your uncalled-for revelation. 'To explain philosophy to the mob', as Lysis says in his somewhat Dorian dialect, 'is only to awaken amongst men a great contempt for things divine.' How often have I met, time and time again, people who, because they had rashly listened to some stately little phrases, refused to believe themselves the laymen that they really were!

Full of vanity, they sullied sacred dogmas by pretending to teach what they had never succeeded in learning. They attached to themselves three or four followers to flatter them, men in no way different in their souls from the vulgar, and none of them such as are instructed through early education. It is a dreadful thing and full of guile, this conceit of wisdom, shrinking at nothing in the case of the ignorant, and daring all things thoughtlessly; for what could be more reckless than ignorance? When I encounter such men, impostors, and drones, who are neither versed in letters nor set them-

selves to the task, I feel detestation for the tribe, but I can find no other cause for the state of their culture than this, that they have been injudiciously and prematurely deemed worthy at the start, no doubt by others such as themselves, to listen to the supremely valuable doctrines. For my part I am, and advise you also to be, a more careful guard over the mysteries of philosophy. That these things are fitted for Herculean, I know well, but if you have approached philosophy itself sincerely, you ought to avoid the society of those who are not faithful to it, and who by their pretence adulterate its great sanctity.

Now in the name of the God of friendship who watches over you, do not show my letter to certain people, for, if you do so, these pictures of evil will anger those who recognize in themselves or amongst their friends the features recorded. To give pain is sometimes a manly act, and quite in the character of philosophy, but only when face to face with those concerned. It seems petty even to write about these things, but whatever Synesius says to himself, he says equally to your honoured soul, to you, his only friend, or at least, his best friend, for he has two others besides. Outside of this triad that you form, there is nothing human that I honour. In joining myself to you I forthwith complete a quaternary of sacred friendship, but as to the nature of the like-named quaternary which belongs to first principles, let it be mentioned with reverence. In the four sets of iambs, I found at the end the twelve lines written continuously as if they only formed a single epigram. As it is quite possible that you have copies of these verses, know then that they are not one and the same, nor are they by one author. The first eight lines, written with knowledge of verse in which poetry is mingled with astronomy, are by your friend. The four last are merely of poetic daintiness, and an ancient fragment. Now, in my opinion, it is much greater sacrilege to steal the verses of the dead than to steal their garments, a thing called grave-robbing.

Take continual care of your health, seek after philosophy with religious care. I promise to wait for you, as long as the twentieth

day of Mesori, and then with God's help I shall take the road. Give all my regards to your excellent friend. I love him because he loves you greatly.

144

To Herculan

50

Phoebammon, who is to give you this letter, is an honest man, one of my friends, and a victim of injustice. For every reason, therefore, you are justified in coming to his assistance, to wit, for our sake, for his character, and the circumstances of his case. So, then, let it be. He himself probably counts very much upon the friendship which unites us. For in the need that he has of you, it is to me that he has come for help, thinking himself assured of gaining your support by my intervention. Thus, as I promised him, he can, thanks to Synesius, count upon Herculan, and, thanks to the sacred and honoured person of Herculan, he can triumph over his adversaries.

You wrote to me by Ursicinus concerning the Count, I mean the one who has been entrusted with the command of the troops in our city. You asked that I should cause letters to be written to the count and to the ordinary prefect, by friends of yours who can manage this. It is true that I accepted your plan at the moment, but in point of fact I rather declined it, as superfluous, for I give myself wholeheartedly to philosophy. Now friends of mine, soldiers and civilians alike, who suffer injustice, are forcing me to pretend to power in the city, a thing for which I know myself to be unqualified by nature. They know this as well as I do, but for their own sakes they are forcing me to take some action, however unwillingly. Now, therefore, if you resolve to act thus, I consent. Salute your hallowed comrade the deacon for me. Let him train against his equestrian rival. My whole household salutes you, including Ision, who has recently joined us, the very man whom you wanted because of his story-telling powers. He was the cause of that sordid and unphilosophic request for a letter which I made to those in power, induced both by his personal persuasion in behalf

of many, and also by letters which he carried with him. He will, then, wait for you up to the day which I indicated to you, that is to say, the twentieth.

145

To Herculan

7

One of my slaves has run away. He is not one of those whom I inherited, or one of those who have in any other way been brought up with me, for all such have received the education of freemen. I have treated them almost as my equals, and I may add that they love me as their chosen chief, rather than fear me as their lawful master. Philoromus, that is the name of the runaway, was a slave belonging to my niece, the daughter of Amelius, and became mine through her. But as he had been brought up without care and discipline, he could not endure a philosophic and Lacedaemonian régime. So he has found a master in place of me, an Alexandrian. At the present moment he is travelling over Egypt with him. Now amongst the henchmen of Heraclian there is a certain Harpocraton, whose rank is that of assistant aide-de-camp—at least, so the word *subadiuva* is interpreted. It is in this man's company that Philoromus is. So far as I am concerned, I would most willingly have said farewell to him, for it is absurd that a rascal can do without honest people, and that confessedly honest people cannot do without a rascal. But the mistress of this scamp is not yet sufficiently a philosopher to despise those people who do not stick to her, and she has urged me to dispatch people to bring him back. Aithales, my messmate, has taken this task upon himself. I send him, confiding him to the guidance of God, and besides this I have promised him human help, namely yours. May this letter be handed over to you. Now that you understand the proposal, for the future it will concern only God, yourself, and Aithales.

146

To Herculan

48

The desire which I felt to fortify your hallowed soul made me write to you in blame of your excessive desire to converse with me. But long ago there was such a flood of enchantments in your

letters that I, in turn, felt softened. And you see me to-day such a man as I at one time reproached you for being. Has the illustrious Herculian done me great benefit in thus making my soul depend on himself, and in compelling it to descend from the heights of philosophy? I believe that the Sirens are censured by the poets purely because by the melody of their voice they lured to destruction one who had put his trust in them. I heard some man of learning too give an allegorical explanation of this tale. He said that the Sirens¹ signified for the wise an allegory of the voluptuous pleasures, which destroy, little by little, those yielding to them and bewitched by their enticements. Well now, how do the pleasures of your letters differ from the Sirens, they which make me dismiss from my mind all that is serious, and cause me to become the entire possession of Herculian? May God be my witness that I have not written these words, as the habit of writers is, for want of something else to say, or in search of a subject for my pen!

Amongst the three letters which Ursicinus gave me, the one which is midway between the others in length bore some vital affection of the soul which it has instilled into me, and I am so influenced by the flattery in it that I am ashamed. You ought to have given your brother Cyrus a letter on the subject you have mentioned to me; because of the Count from Pentapolis. I am much indebted to you for your desire to recommend me to him; but you have forgotten that I do not wish to be anything but a philosopher. No honour has much value for me except it lie in the sphere of philosophy. I am, God be praised, in want of nothing. We do no harm to any one; no one does harm to us. It was fitting for the Count to show his consideration for us; it is not fitting for us to solicit it. If there had been any question of seeking letters of introduction, the request ought to have been made to address them to me, for that would be doing me honour. I should not ask anybody to send any addressed to another on our behalf. Take continual care of your health and happiness, be the loyal servant of philosophy. The whole

¹ Οἱ δ' ἐν νηϊ μὲν ἔδησαν ὁμοῦ χεῖρας τε πόδας τε, κ.τ.λ. See Letter 32.

household, God be my witness, salutes you, the young and old alike, and the women; but perhaps you detest women, even when they are well-disposed to you. See what you have done to me. I was already on the road, but you hold me fast and do not let me go. The Egyptians were sorcerers, and Homer does not falsify everything, I see, since you yourself also send me from Egypt letters full of incantations. The drug which brings forgetfulness of grief was handed to Helen by Polydamna, the wife of Thon. But who gave you the painful philtre with which you have infected the letter you sent me?¹

147

To Joannes

144

I think you are a happy man beyond all power of expression, inasmuch as you have left us—poor wretches—‘wandering in the darkened meadow of Ate’², tossed about as we are amidst earthly thoughts. While still alive you have raised yourself above these, and have entered into the happy life, unless your friend Ganus in speaking of you, and in conveying your messages to us, thinks it incumbent upon him to utter a bit of falsehood as well, for goodwill has a dreadful way of concealing the truth. This very Ganus tells us then that you are living in a monastery, and that if you ever come in to town, it is only to consult books, and so much of their contents as pertains to theology. He also says that you are wearing the coarse, dark mantle. The mantle would lose nothing from being white, for what is clear and luminous to the eyes, would be better suited to the pure character. But if you have given your

¹ Τοῖα Διὸς θυγάτηρ ἔχε φάρμακα μητιόεντα,
ἔσθλα, τὰ οἱ Πολύδαμνα πόρεν, Θῶνος παράκοιτις,
Αἰγυπτίῃ, τῇ πλεῖστα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα
φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἔσθλα μεμιγμένα, πολλὰ δὲ λυγρά.

² ‘Medicines of such virtue and so helpful had the daughter of Zeus, which Polydamna, the wife of Thon, had given her, a woman of Egypt, where earth the grain-giver yields herbs in greatest plenty, many that are healing in the cup, and many baneful.’—*Odyssey*, iv. 227 (Butcher and Lang).

² From Empedocles (Diels, *Vorsokratiker*², fr. 121).

approval to the dark one out of zeal for any who assumed it before you, I give mine to all that is undertaken from a divine motive. For the motive of an action justifies the doer of it, and it is in the intention that virtue resides. I congratulate you, therefore, on having achieved offhand the end that we have long been hammering at with great difficulty. Pray with us, that we also may reach it. May we derive some benefit from the thought we have devoted to philosophy, and may we not have passed our lives over books in vain! Accept all my best wishes for your health and happiness, my dear friend.

148

To Olympius

93

I have neglected the duty to pay tribute, but what could I do? Not one of the Greeks settled in Libya is willing to dispatch merchantmen to your sea. At the same time I release you from your own contribution, for Syrians never take the trouble to call at the ports of the Cyrenaïca, and if one did by chance come, I should never know of it. As a matter of fact, I do not live near the sea, and I very rarely come to the harbour. I have moved up country to the southern extremity of the Cyrenaïca, and my neighbours are such men as Odysseus was in quest of, when he steered from Ithaca, to appease the wrath of Poseidon, in obedience to the oracle:

Men, who know not of the sea
Nor eat food mixed with salt.

But do not think that I am exaggerating when I say that people here do not take to the sea, even for the purpose of getting their salt, nor yet suppose that thus they eat their meat and cakes unsalted. We have, I swear by holy Vesta, at a distance to the south less than that which separates us from the sea to the north, a native salt which comes from the earth and which we call Hammon's salt.¹ It collects under a scab, as it were, of crumbling stone, and when this scab, which conceals it, has been removed, it is easy enough to scoop out the depths with one's hand or with a shovel, and the

¹ A kind of *rock-salt* (L.-S. ed. 9).

lumps that you may take up in this manner are salt, pleasant both to look at and to taste. Do not think it sophistical vanity on my part, this account of the salts found in this country. Rustic people such as we are the last to harbour vain glory. But you express a wish to learn from me about everything in my part of the world ; therefore be prepared for a loquacious letter, that you may pay the penalty for your untimely curiosity. At the same time, what is foreign to any one is difficult of credence. A Syrian will not easily acknowledge the existence of salt from the earth, very much as people here are hard to convince, when I answer questions about ships, sails, and the sea. You may remember that once when I was studying philosophy with you, I looked out upon this very thing, the sea, and the great, deep lake which stretches from Pharos to Canopus.¹ One ship was being towed in ; another was moving with all sails set ; another was propelled by oars. You laughed at me when I compared this last one to a centipede. Now the people here are in the same state of mind as we ourselves, whenever we listen to tales of the world beyond Thule, whatever Thule may be, which gives to those who have crossed it freedom to lie about it without criticism or censure. Even if they admit what is told them about vessels, or only seem to laugh at it, at all events they stoutly refuse to believe that the sea too is able to nourish mankind. According to their idea, this privilege belongs to mother earth alone.

On one occasion, when they refused to believe in the existence of fish, I took a certain jar and, dashing it against a stone, showed them plenty of salted fish from Egypt, on which they said they were the bodies of evil snakes, sprang up and took to flight, for they suspected that the spines were as dangerous as the poison of a serpent's fang. Then the oldest and most intelligent of them all said that he found it difficult to believe that salt water could produce anything good and fit to eat, since spring water, excellent though it be to drink, produces nothing except frogs and leeches,

¹ Lake Mareotis.

which not even a madman would taste. And yet their ignorance is natural.

'For the onrushing wave' of the sea 'awakens them not in the night'—only the neighings of horses, the bleating of a herd of goats, the cry of sheep, or the bellowing of a bull; then at the first ray of sunshine the humming of bees, yielding the palm to no other music in the pleasure it gives. Does it not seem to you that I am setting forth in detail the topics of Anchemachus,¹ when I speak of the country where we live, far away from the town, far from roads, far from commerce and its wily morality? For us there is time for philosophy, but no time to do evil. All our meetings are full of comradeship for all, for we depend on each other for farming, for our shepherds and flocks, and for every sort of hunting which the land affords. No one of us, either man or horse, may take his food without the sweat of his brow. We lunch off barley-groats, most sweet to gobble up, most sweet to gulp down, like that which Hecamede prepares for Nestor.² After heavy fatigue this drink is a safeguard against the summer heat. Then again we have wheaten cakes, and fruits, either wild or cultivated, all grown in our country—with the flavour of the best soil; also honey from our bees and milk from our goats, for it is not the custom here to milk cows. Moreover, hunting with the assistance of dogs and horses brings no less an abundance to our tables. I do not know why Homer has not described hunting as a glory to man and as ennobling those that pursue it. He has so eulogized the forum, that makes us poor men shameless and utterly vile, a place in which there is no health, but only railing and skill in contriving evil. When they of the forum are under our roofs, we laugh at them, for they shiver at the sight of wild beasts' flesh fresh from the fire. What do I say? wild beasts' flesh? Why, they would rather taste poison than any such dishes of ours! They seek the lightest wine, the thickest honey, the thinnest olive oil, and the heaviest wheat. They are always

¹ I cannot trace the allusion.

² Τοῖσι δὲ τεύχε κυκείῳ ἐυπλόκαμος Ἑκαμήδη, κ.τ.λ.—*Iliad*, xi. 624.

'And fair-tressed Hekamede mixed for them a mess.'—Lang, Leaf, and Myers.

singing the praises of the places where these products may be obtained, such as Cyprus, a certain Hymettus, Phoenice, and Barathra. Our country, even if it is inferior to each country that holds the first place in some one particular, surpasses that land in the rest ; and this is to hold the first place by virtue of the second places, just as by gaining this distinction, Peleus and Themistocles were proclaimed to the Greeks the best of all in all things. We will admit, if you like, that our honey is not as good as the honey of Hymettus ; nevertheless it is so good that, when you have it, it falls not short of the foreign flavour. As to the olive-oil of this country, it is certainly the best, if one does not listen to people whose taste is depraved, for these persist in judging oil by weight, and the less heavy they hold to be more valuable. With us scales are not forged for oil, but we assert that if this must be done, it would be natural to give preference to the heavier. Moreover, their oil, however famous and costly, when once put into a lamp, is so feeble that it scarcely gives any light at all. But our oil is so good that it gives out a complete flame, and when a lamp is needed, it produces artificial daylight. It is useful for enriching cakes, or to make the sinews of athletes supple. Again, the art of music is especially native to our country. Our Anchemachetae play upon a little shepherd's lyre, a simple thing made by themselves, sweet-toned and fairly masculine in its note, not unworthy for the bringing-up of children in Plato's city. For it is not supple, nor does it have the virtue of adaptation to every note. However, our singers accommodate themselves to the simplicity of its strings, for they do not attempt sentimental subjects. One fair subject of song amongst us is praise of the vigorous ram, and the dog with the lost tail comes in for a eulogy, because I suppose he deserves it for not fearing the hyenas, and strangling the wolves. Then the hunter is not least a subject of song, who brings peace to our pastures and feasts us with every sort of meat. Nor is the twin-bearing ewe deemed unworthy of our lyre, she who rears lambs more numerous than the years. We also often sing with vigour the praises of the fig-tree and the vine, but above all we sing to supplicate Heaven, asking blessings for men, and crops,

and cattle. Such are our celebrations, seasonable and of old tradition, the good things of the poor ; but as to the Emperor, as to the favourites of the Emperor, and fortune's dance, which we hear about when we come together, all those mere names which, like flames, are shot up to a great height of glory, only to be extinguished ; no one, or hardly any one, speaks of them here. Our ears have rest from such stories. No doubt men know well that there is always an Emperor living, for we are reminded of this every year by those who collect the taxes ; but who he is, is not very clear. There are people amongst us who suppose that Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, is still king, the great and good king who went against Troy. From childhood we have heard the king spoken of by this name and no other. He has for a friend, our good herdsmen say, a certain Odysseus, a bald man, quite wonderful in dealing with events, and finding a way out of difficulties, and indeed they tell with laughter the story of the Cyclops, imagining that Odysseus blinded him only a year ago ; and how the old man was conveyed under the belly of a ram, how this outcast mounted guard at the entrance, and imagined that the leader of the flock was bringing up the rear, not from the weight he was carrying, but through sympathy for his master's misfortune.¹

Through this letter you have at all events been with us in spirit for a little while. You have watched our fields and seen the simplicity of our life, and no doubt you will say to yourself, it was thus that they lived in the time of Noah, before justice was enslaved.

149

To Olympius

94

Although absent, you live always present in our memory, for not even if we greatly desired it, could we forget the sweetness of your disposition and your most sincere character, brother admirable in

¹ Καὶ τότ' ἐγὼ τὸν μοχλὸν ἐπὶ σποδοῦ ἤλασα πολλῆς,
εἶως θερμαίνοιτο, κ.τ.λ.—*Odyssey*, ix. 375.

'Then I thrust in that stake under the deep ashes, until it should grow hot.'—Butcher and Lang.

all things. Nothing can be more precious to me than my recollections of you, nothing except the prospect of embracing your revered head again. May God grant this happiness, and may we see you and hear the sweet sound of your voice! You delighted us also by what you sent; for we received them all. But you have saddened us more by the thought of the living comrade of whom we are deprived, although not by death. May the moment of good fortune come some day, and may God bring me this good fortune.

I think that even in your Heraclea nobody is ignorant of the name of our fellow-countryman, the philosopher Alexander, a man who acquitted himself with credit everywhere.

‘A dumb man is he who does not lend his tongue to Heracles.’¹

My own cousin, his son, will give you this letter. He wishes to follow in the footsteps of his father, in order to be like him, not in dress but in character. He is therefore going to war against evil men, to purify the city of them like another Heracles.² He needed of course the protection of God and the arm of Heracles, but he needed also the co-operation and assistance of an Ioleos. As to the favour of God, my cousin will neglect nothing to obtain it, and this he will gain by the virtue of his life and the piety of his heart, but I am endeavouring by this letter to find another Ioleos for him in you and in your friendship. You will be for him all that you have been for me. When you have admitted this young man to your friendship, you will admit that I was not wrong in praising him.

¹ Pindar, *Pythians*, ix. 87.

² Cf. Pausanias, v. 1. 9: ‘This Augeas had so many cows and flocks of goats that most of the land lay untilld by reason of their dung. Augeas persuaded Hercules . . . to cleanse the country from the dung. This Hercules did by turning the stream of the Menius upon the dung.’ Frazer’s *Pausanias*, vol. i, p. 237.

151

To Pylaemenes

84

Tell me, do you stand firm in philosophy, that Pylaemenes whom I left behind, the soul newly initiated, the offspring divine? I fear the time which has passed since that birth; I fear still more the intercourse of the market-place, the absorption in many situations and affairs; and that these may soil that most holy temple, your divine intellect, one of the few I deem entirely worthy to receive God. I know that one of my dearest wishes was to be able to celebrate with you the mysteries of philosophy, but since patriotism is stronger in your heart, I pray that wherever in the world you may be, you will cultivate philosophy as much as possible. So I embrace your dear head. I embrace it again and again, whether I am silent or speaking, whether I write or do not write.

152

To Pylaemenes

27

Believe me that I embrace Pylaemenes, very soul and very soul. Words fail me wherewith I may pour out the fullness of my heart's desire, or rather I cannot explain, even to myself, the nature of the sentiments that I feel for you. But there was one man at least who was extraordinary in all knowledge of Love. That was Plato the Athenian, the son of Ariston, so happy in discovering, and pleasant in describing the nature of the lover and also his desires in regard to the beloved. It is he, therefore, who shall discover and describe for me. The man who loves, he said, would fain be melted by the art of Hephaestus, and so completely united with the beloved object, that two would become one.¹

¹ Plato, *Symposium*, 192D: Καὶ εἰ αὐτοῖς . . . ἐπιστὰς ὁ "Ηφαίστος . . . ἐροίτο, . . . Ἄρα γε τοῦδε ἐπιθυμεῖτε, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ὅ τι μάλιστα ἀλλήλοις . . . ; θέλω ὑμᾶς συντῆξαι, καὶ συμφυσῆσαι εἰς τὸ αὐτό, ὥστε δύο ὄντας ἓνα γεγονέναι. . . . 'Suppose Hephaestus should come to them and ask. . . . 'Do you desire to be wholly one . . . ? for . . . I am willing to melt you into one, and let you grow together, so that, being two, you shall become one.'"

153

To Pylaemenes

108

A letter comes to us from you every year, as though the seasons themselves brought it with them, and this fruit is perchance sweeter to me than that which the circling months and the husbandmen bring to maturity. You would do me an injustice if you deprived me of the joy I find in this. Change your mind, then, and send me, this year at least, an abundance of letters.

154

To the Philosopher (Hypatia)

63

I have brought out two books this year. One of them as I was moved thereto by God Himself, the other because of the slander of men. Some of those who wear the white or dark mantle have maintained that I am faithless to philosophy, apparently because I profess grace and harmony of style, and because I venture to say something concerning Homer and concerning the figures of the rhetoricians.¹ In the eyes of such persons one must hate literature in order to be a philosopher, and must occupy himself with divine matters only. No doubt these men alone have become spectators of the knowable. This privilege is unlawful for me, for I spend some of my leisure in purifying my tongue and sweetening my wit. The thing which urged them to condemn me, on the charge that I am fit only for trifling, is the fact that my *Cynegetics* disappeared from my house, how I know not, and that they have been received with great enthusiasm by certain young men who make a cult of Atticisms and graceful periods. Moreover, some poetical attempts of mine

¹ Von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff remarks (p. 287): 'The letters show what an excellent man Synesius was. His head and his heart were in the right place. Without fear and loyally he stands amidst the black and white mantles, amidst scoundrels dressed in purple and savages bedecked with feathers.' The white and the black mantle were the signs of the philosopher and the monk respectively.

have seemed to them the work of an artist who reproduces the antique, as we are wont to say in speaking of statues. There are certain men among my critics whose effrontery is only surpassed by their ignorance, and these are the readiest of all to spin out discussions concerning God. Whenever you meet them, you have to listen to their babble about inconclusive syllogisms. They pour a torrent of phrases over those who stand in no need of them, in which I suppose they find their own profit. The public teachers that one sees in our cities, come from this class. It is a very Horn of Amalthea¹ which they think themselves entitled to use. You will, I think, recognize this easy-going tribe, which miscalls nobility of purpose. They wish me to become their pupil; they say that in a short time they will make me all-daring in questions of divinity, and that I shall be able to declaim day and night without stopping. The rest, who have more taste, are, as sophists, much more unfortunate than these. They would like to be famous in the same way, but fortunately for them they are incapable even of this. You know some who, despoiled at the office of the tax collector, or urged thereto by some one calamity, have become philosophers in the middle of their lives. Their philosophy consists in a very simple formula, that of calling God to witness, as Plato did, whenever they deny anything or whenever they assert anything. A shadow would surpass these men in uttering anything to the point; but their pretensions are extraordinary. Oh, what proudly arched brows! They support their beards with the hand. They assume a more solemn countenance than the statues of Xenocrates. They are even resolved to shackle us with a law which is altogether to their advantage; to wit, that no one shall be in open possession of any knowledge of the good. They esteem it an exposure of themselves if any one, deemed a philosopher, knows how to speak, for they think to hide behind a veil of simulation and to appear to be quite full of wisdom within. These are the two types of men who have falsely charged me with occupying myself in trivial pursuits, one of them because I do not talk

¹ Diodorus Siculus, iv. 35, perhaps. 'Ἀμαλθείας δ' εἶναι κέρας οἶονεῖ τινος ἀμαλαιοσύνης. . . . Crawford, p. 528.

the same sort of nonsense as they do, the other because I do not keep my mouth shut, and do not keep the 'bull on my tongue', as they do.¹ Against these was my treatise composed, and it deals with the loquacity of the one school and the silence of the other. Although it is to the latter in particular that it is addressed, namely to the speechless and envious men in question (do you not think with some comeliness of form?), none the less it has found means of dragging in those other men also, and it aims at being not less an exhibition than an encomium of great learning. Nor did I abjure their charges, but for their still greater discomfiture I have often even courted them.

Next, passing to the choice of a life, the work praises that of philosophy as being the most philosophic of choices; and what sort of choice it must be regarded, learn from the book itself. Finally, it defends my library also, which the same men have accused, on the ground that it conceals unrevised copies. The spiteful fellows have not kept their hands even off things like these. If each thing is in its proper place; and all things have been handled in season; if the motives behind each part of the undertaking are just; if it has been divided into a number of chapters in the manner of that divine work *The Phaedrus*, in which Plato discusses the various types of the beautiful; if all the arguments have been devised to converge on the one end proposed; if, moreover, conviction has anywhere quietly come to the support of the flatness of the narrative, and if out of conviction demonstration has resulted, as happens in such cases, and if one thing follows from another logically, these results must be gifts of nature and art.

He who is not undisciplined to discover even a certain divine countenance hidden under a coarser model, like that Aphrodite, those Graces, and such charming divinities as the Athenian artists

¹ Βοῦς μοι ἐπὶ γλώσσης κρατερῶ ποδὶ λάξ ἐπιβαίνων,
ἴσχει κωτίλλειν καίπερ ἐπιστάμενον.

Theognis, *Paraenesis*, 815.

βοῦς ἐπὶ γλώσση μέγας
βέβηκεν.

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 36.

concealed within sculptured figures of a Silenus or a Satyr,¹ that man, at all events, will apprehend all that my book has unveiled of the mystic dogmas. But the meanings of these will easily escape others because of their semblance of redundancy, and their appearance of being thrown into the narrative too much by chance, and as it might seem roughly. Epileptics are the only people who feel the cold influences of the moon. On the other hand only those receive the flashes of the emanations of the intellect, for whom in the full health of the mind's eye God kindles a light akin to his own, that light which is the cause of knowledge to the intellectual, and to knowable things the cause of their being known.² In the same way, ordinary light connects sight with colour. But remove this light, and its power to discern is ineffective.

Concerning all this I shall await your decision. If you decree that I ought to publish my book, I will dedicate it to orators and philosophers together. The first it will please, and to the others it will be useful, provided of course that it is not rejected by you, who are really able to pass judgement. If it does not seem to you worthy of Greek ears, if, like Aristotle, you prize truth more than friendship,³ a close and profound darkness will overshadow it, and mankind will never hear it mentioned.

¹ Plato, *Symposium*, 215 A : Φημι γάρ δὴ ὁμοιωτάτων αὐτὸν εἶναι τοῖς σιληνοῖς τούτοις . . . οἱ διχάδε διοιχθέντες φαίνονται ἐνδοθεν ἀγάλματα ἔχοντες θεῶν. 'I say, that he (Socrates) is exactly like the busts of Silenus which are set up in statuary's shops, . . . and they are made to open in the middle, and have images of gods inside them' (Jowett).

² Τὸν ἥλιον τοῖς ὁρωμένοις οὐ μόνον οἶμαι τὴν τοῦ ὁρᾶσθαι δύναμιν παρέχειν φήσεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν γένεσιν καὶ αὔξην καὶ τροφήν, οὐ γένεσιν αὐτὸν ὄντα. Πῶς γάρ; Καὶ τοῖς γιγνώσκουμένοις τοίνυν μὴ μόνον τὸ γιγνώσκεισθαι φάναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ παρέιναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν ὑπ' ἐκείνου αὐτοῖς προσεῖναι, οὐκ οὐσίας ὄντος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ἀλλ' ἐτι ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβεῖα καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος.—Plato, *Republic*, 509 B. 'Just as the sun furnishes to the objects of sight not only their capacity for being seen, but also their generation, growth, and nutrition, even so the objects of knowledge derive from the good not only their capacity for being known, but also their existence and their reality, though the good is not reality, and is on the other side of it, transcending it in majesty and power.' This passage is quoted by H. Jackson in his article on Plato in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia*, vol. x, p. 57, q. v. It is the key to the third period of Plato's philosophy, that of the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Cratylus*.

³ Ἀμφοῖν γὰρ ὄντων φίλον, ὅσιον προτιμᾶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν.—Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.*, i. 4, 1096a 16.

So much for this matter. The other work God ordained and He gave His sanction to it, and it has been set up as a thank-offering to the imaginative faculties. It contains an inquiry into the whole imaginative soul, and into some other points which have not yet been handled by any Greek philosopher. But why should one dilate on this? This work was completed, the whole of it, in a single night, or rather, at the end of a night, one which also brought the vision enjoining me to write it. There are two or three passages in the book in which it seemed to me that I was some other person, and that I was one listening to myself amongst others who were present. Even now this work, as often as I go over it, produces a marvellous effect upon me, and a certain divine voice envelops me as in poetry. Whether this my experience is not unique, or may happen to another, on all this you will enlighten me, for after myself you will be the first of the Greeks to have access to the work. The books that I am sending you have not yet been published, and in order that the number may be complete, I am sending you also my essay concerning the Gift. This was produced long ago in my ambassadorial period. It was addressed to a man who had great influence with the emperor,¹ and Pentapolis profited somewhat from the essay, and also from the gift.

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To Domitian, the Jurist

105

I know quite clearly, from the facts themselves, that your greatest pleasure is to do good, and that you are always ready to hold out a helping hand to the needy. I appeal to you with this very purpose, thinking to turn, as they say, the horse to the plain.² My dear friend, you should now show more kindness than ever, inasmuch as the future beneficiary is in this case the more pitiable, for it is a woman that is in question, who has the misfortune to be a widow, and her sufferings

¹ Paeonius is here alluded to. See the letter addressed to him 'On the gift of an astrolabe'.

² Plato, *Theaetetus*, 183 D: 'Ἰππέας εἰς πεδίον προκαλεῖ, Σωκράτης εἰς λόγους προκαλοῦμενος.

have been shared with an orphan child. Who it is that has wronged her, in what way, and how, she herself will instruct your goodness. I beg you, therefore, my friend, to come to her aid, because that would be a good deed, and one worthy of you, and I ask it for my sake as well, for I too will share with you in whatever befalls her. She is a kinswoman of mine, and brought up virtuously under an honourable mother in our midst.

156

To Domitian, the Jurist

106

Whatsoever things are righteous stand in need of allies, and those who come to their rescue may be accounted fortunate, inasmuch as they are co-operating with the upright. It is you whom I have chosen as the bulwark of these principles, as you will defend them with knowledge and skill. It is my desire to do good to all whom I can benefit. Do you yourself give me the opportunity! You will gain knowledge of a friendship that you will not yourself regret, and which no one is likely to ridicule.

157

To Chryso-

139

To all others spring is delightful, because it beautifies the face of the earth with flowers, and makes of the whole country a meadow. To me its great charm is that it allows me by writing to be with my own dear flowers. Would that I could behold you face to face! As this joy, however, is denied me, I very eagerly do what I may, and consort with you by letter. Sailors and seamen do not feel as great pleasure in cutting through the expanse of the sea when this time of the year has come, as I feel in taking up my pen, paper, and ink to write to your charming self. In winter time, when everything was in the grip of frost and when the roads were blocked by unspeakable snow, no one dared to come to visit us from the outer world, and no one dared to go away from here. Shut up here in our houses, then, as in a prison, we were to our regret condemned to keep this long silence, the lack of letter-carriers acting as a sort of muzzle; but to-day, now that the mild season has opened the

public roads and has loosened our tongue-strings, we hasten to send away to your excellency the presbyter who is living with us, that he may obtain some news of your health. Give him, most admirable chief, the sort of reception that he deserves. Turn a sympathetic eye upon him, and when he comes back, let us know, I beg of you, the state of your health, for you know how anxious we are to hear about it.

158

To Chryso-

140

The son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles, after receiving from Aeolus the treasure-stores of winds, was approaching rocky Ithaca, and was already listening to the songs of birds, but through the contrivances of his comrades he was driven far away from his native place.

We, alas, hearing the song of birds and the barking of dogs, and being so near our friends themselves that we almost hear their talk, return home, deprived of those longed for, who long for us, and we acquiesce in a fortune that so tramples on us insatiably. We are slaves to time, and we yield to circumstances, whereby the intellect is overcome, and the soul made to suffer exceedingly under the pressure of necessity. And you yourself, sweetest of friends, who know well our love, since you love us, continue then to pray for us. Farewell.

159

To an unknown correspondent

118

Your wise letter has come to us, so tasteful and withal so brief, yet so eloquent, the offspring of your marvellous brain. I am greatly delighted with it, for it pleases me doubly, first, as coming from the best of friends, and from one entirely worthy of praise, and, second, on account of the rare grace with which it has been composed. Nay, it has incited me to something else more formidable and audacious. Did not our old affection, with its power to unite things far separated, and often to bring into accord forces antagonistic to each other—did

not this old affection, I say, make a plea for forgiveness in this matter, perchance we should thus be very little removed from the position of those who have good cause to be angry. To what, perhaps you ask, has it incited me? Why, to make response, as you see, with my own tongue to such a great man, assuredly initiated by the muses, if any man ever was; to one of whom Demosthenes would have said, had he seen him amongst us, that he had come among men as a copy of Hermes the eloquent.¹ This tongue of mine never in old days had the least share in the best, and now it is so rough that it can scarce call a spade a spade.² For I tell you in all confidence that the suffering which I endure in silence now rather threatens to gain the mastery over me, as fate has willed it.

This indeed makes us pity rather than congratulate ourselves, inasmuch as it is not even accorded us to meet here any one of the highest destiny, such as yourself, by contact with whom something of our barbarous side might perhaps be filed away, and thus our real qualities gradually emerge from their stale odour of the goat-pen.

Now is the moment to pity myself more than ever before, for your request was inopportune: the oil which you ask me for, and which I wish to give you, or, to speak truly, which I was keeping to give to such a man as you, this oil has remained in the country. As the nature of the case would have it, it was bestowed for use.

Moreover there is not an olive tree without eyes on it—if you will put up with just a little use of the ordinary phraseology—on which my dear friend might be grafted, for each one has been filled already, and is beginning to bring forth fruit with all its might. This is how the matter stands. The rest will be made clear by him who is now with you and perhaps he will state plainly to you how that which you asked for missed the right moment.

¹ For this metaphor see Letter 101, where it occurs again; Aristides, ii, p. 100 (Jebb). Synesius here puts Demosthenes by mistake for Aristides, as Crawford, to whom I am indebted for the reference, suggests (p. 528).

² σκαιὸς ἔφη φύσει καὶ ἀγροίκους εἶναι Μακεδόνας καὶ τὴν σκάφην σκάφην λέγοντας. Plutarch, *Witticisms of Kings*, Philipp. 15.

Be well and happy in devoting yourself to the whole of philosophy.¹

*To Paeonius*²

I heard you recently expressing indignation on behalf of philosophy, and asking whether there could be any limit to the impiety of men towards it, again lamenting that it had encountered evil and harsh fortune, for that those who falsely pretend knowledge of it, by their continual charlatanism enjoy a good reputation with the ruling class and the people alike. But the true philosophers are discredited, and are honoured only with the Carian portion.³ I admired your outburst, for it proceeded from a really noble nature. For all that, one need not be angry when what is only logical is taking place, and it is quite logical that every man should attain what he has busied himself with, and worked for, and again should not attain those things the which he never struggled for, nor took thought how they might be his. If, therefore, one man has set his mind on becoming wise, and another upon only seeming so, each one will possess that which befits him, the one in being wise, the other in merely appearing to be wise. Now truly, they would suffer grievously—those who are in pursuit of a reputation for the false, not the real philosophy, and would indeed be quite justly angered, if those who desired the other kind only should be found in possession of both, and they themselves in possession of neither! And this in spite of

¹ Cf. *Letters of Sidonius*, i. 6. 3: 'Shame on you now if you bury yourself among cowkeeping rustics, or grunting swineherds, as if it were the height of your felicity to feel the plough-handle tremble above the cleft furrow. . . . Is it a less duty in a man of your descent to cultivate himself than his estate?' Translated by O. M. Dalton.

² 'While in Constantinople, Synesius became acquainted with the Count Paeonius, a military man who was fond of philosophy, science, and literature. He stood high in the esteem of Arcadius, and the philosopher (Synesius) . . . made and presented him with an astrolabe, which he sent to him with a letter, nominally on the gift, . . . far more on the value of philosophers'.—Crawford, p. 408. In Letter 154 there is an account of the conception and aims of this letter or essay. It is not printed amongst the letters in Hercher's edition.

³ The Carians in Asia Minor were among the most despised of ancient peoples.

the fact that they have cultivated the easier thing with no less care than their rivals, in order to deceive those who know nothing of the very matters in the which they are deceived. Let such men, accordingly, be shining lights, let them be crowned in the theatres if they so desire ; for having been deserters from the cause of Truth, they are disputing over its name only.

Now as to us, who are of but slight importance, it is evident that you desire to include me amongst the elect, and it was largely on my account that you were so incensed at the present state of philosophy. Treated though we are, therefore, with disregard by other men, we should nevertheless be pleased at the rank into which we have been marshalled by ourselves. Let us not be envious of these half-instructed ones, nor esteem them happy when they are praised to the skies by those who have no education whatever, for they who are not purified may not see the beauty of the purified soul, and the heralding abroad of oneself and the doing of all things for display is the part not of wisdom but of sophistry. Wherefore it may be properly said by those who share not in such honour as the multitude can confer, 'I need not this honour, but I seek to be honoured by the destiny of Zeus',¹ to rejoice and be of great joy that I have met with a man who possesses both sagacity and power, for thus only shall we not be counted with the unworthy, nor be esteemed utterly without honour.

How shall I fail to keep the most intimate spot in my heart for the admirable Paeonius, he who has found means of restoring and binding to each other philosophy and military science, so long walled away from each other by many ramparts, and has detected the affinity which aforesaid existed between these pursuits ! For when Italy in bygone days possessed the same men as pupils of Pythagoras and governors of cities, it was called Magna Graecia, and rightly so. Of these men Charondas and Zaleucus gave laws, the Archytæ and the Philolai were the leaders in the field.² The

¹

... οὐτι με ταύτης

χρεὸν τιμῆς φρονέω δὲ τετιμῆσθαι Διὸς αἴσῃ. *Iliad*, ix. 608.

² Charondas of Catana in Sicily, legislated for that and other cities in Sicily, as well

greatest of astronomers ruled over a city, and was an ambassador, besides taking other parts in political life, Timaeus himself, on whose authority Plato discourses to us concerning the universe. Having been entrusted with these communities, as late as the ninth generation after Pythagoras they preserved Italy in prosperity, and as to the Eleatic school at Athens, letters and arms were pursued by it with equal honour for both.

In the case of Zeno you would find it difficult to enumerate how many tyrannies he destroyed, always reinstating in their place a healthy form of city government. Again, Xenophon taking command of those ten thousand, exhausted by sufferings and almost at the point of death, led them back from the utmost confines of the Persian Empire, overcoming every obstacle in his way. And what can one say of this?—the succession of Dion to the monarchy of Dionysius, that kingdom which had enslaved the Greek cities in Sicily, those not the least in respect to power, and also the barbarians. Even the will of the Carthaginians it bent, and it gained ground even on the coast of Italy.

Nay, it was against that kingdom that the lover and beloved of Plato collected a mercenary army and set sail for Sicily, embarking his whole fighting force on a single ship, and that a merchantman; and it was with such an equipment as this that Dionysius was driven out, and that Dion transformed the constitution, and restored the cities to the reign of law.

Thus, in the past, philosophy and statecraft were united, and when they so went hand in hand, such were their achievements. But, as in the case of other fair and hallowed things, with all of which Time has worked havoc, this double type, too, forsook the succeeding age, and separation of the functions was reserved for posterity. Surely it is not worth while to dwell on the destinies of man. Is it not for this very reason that other good things also have deserted

as for Regium in Italy. His date was perhaps the same as that assigned to Zaleucus, namely the seventh century B.C. Zaleucus is associated with Locri in southern Italy. Archytas was of Tarentum, and lived in the first half of the fourth century B.C., while Philolaus, his contemporary, belonged to Croton.

us? For no greater misfortune could possibly befall cities than to have strength without intelligence, and intellect without power. Now *you* seem about to restore to us this duality of force, for you are entrusted with the management of public affairs, and at the same time you believe in the cultivation of philosophy. Strike then, as it is a fair struggle in which you are engaged, on behalf of us and the Muses, so that no one may expel them from the market-place or the camp as unpractical and unworkable, as of no use for actions to be fought under the open sky, but merely pretty things for children to play with and babble about.¹ It is fitting that every one of us should stretch out a hand to your assistance in so far as the power within him lies. Thus you would be fashioned a wise man indeed, not a half-fulfilled or mutilated sage, as must be the case whenever a man is upheld by his natural bent only. Well were it for a state to be governed by such men as this, and we should be the gainers thereby, courting honour for philosophy from men, while at the same time we should live a worthy moral life. So a probability might come about quite contrary to that which was mentioned recently, when we were saying that the tribe of sophists laid their snares for the ignorance of the multitude, and that as a result of this the legitimate sons of philosophy came to have less repute than the supposititious and fraudulent. But when those who hold the reins of government, and have the affairs of the cities in their grasp, are not of the people, but possess intellectual culture, they will quickly make the distinction between the legitimate and illegitimate philosopher, and no longer will it be difficult for the common people to learn what sort of deception has been practised upon them. There will be no need to address them on the matter; all that is necessary is to brand the charlatans with their own obscurity.

It is, moreover, a law of Nature that the class which leads should be admired, by reason of the subjection of the governed. Nay, even now, mostly for the very drollness of things the multitude follows the long-haired sages and all such brazen creatures,

¹ Cf. *De Regno*, i (p. 2 P. = 1056 b Migne): *θεραπευταὶ πειθοῦς, νέοις ἡδεῖς καὶ συμπαίστορες*.

and esteems them something extraordinary, and the other more variegated sorts of sophists they all but worship and stand in awe of, particularly those who stride about with a mighty staff, and clear their throats before they speak.

So you will come to the rescue of philosophy in misfortune, but you will not be her accuser, for she is guilty in nothing. The right thing seems to have taken place, and you will further this in the direction of what is better and more fitting, as soon as the study of philosophy has gained a stronger hold upon you. Nay, even now you have nobly taken up the common fight, barking back at these dogs, and undertaking to fortify our Decelea.

Now, having informed myself about you from those who have known you longer than I have, and having known you myself some little time, I am anxious to kindle the sparks of astronomical lore that are lying dormant in your soul, and to raise these aloft by means of your innate qualities. Astronomy itself is a venerable science, and might become a stepping stone to something more august, a science which I think is a convenient passage to mystic theology, for the happy body of heaven has matter underneath it, and its motion has seemed to the leaders in philosophy to be an imitation of mind. It proceeds to its demonstrations in no uncertain way, for it uses as its servants geometry and arithmetic, which it would not be improper to call a fixed standard of truth. I am therefore offering you a gift most befitting for me to give, and for you to receive. It is a work of my own devising, including all that she, my most revered teacher,¹ helped to contribute, and it was executed by the best hand to be found in our country in the art of the silversmiths.

Now, concerning this, by explaining it in advance, I should do something useful to the end in view, and the end I have in view is to call out the philosophic impulses in your nature. For if you should acquire an inclination to gaze with straining eyes upon the apparent, then I shall be holding out to you a greater gift, namely,

¹ Hypatia, who was an astronomer and mathematician. She was the daughter of Theon, a mathematician himself, and was said to excel her father in the science.

the things which concern knowledge itself. So now turn your mind to what I say concerning what is demonstrated.

The representation of a spherical surface, maintaining identity of doctrine amidst difference of figures, Hipparchus of old vaguely shadowed, and he was the first to direct his energies to this question. But we, if it is not more than it befits us to say, have finished the weaving of this tissue even to the fringes, and have perfected it. The problem had been neglected in the long intervening time. The great Ptolemy and the divine band of his successors were content to have it as their one useful possession, for the sixteen stars made it sufficient for the night clock. Hipparchus merely transposed these stars and inserted them in the instrument.

Every allowance must be made for these men, inasmuch as the more important problems were still unsolved, and geometry was still at the nursing stage. They were therefore obliged to work on hypotheses only. But we, in return for the splendid mass of knowledge that we owe to their achievements, without labour on our own part, should be grateful to these happy men who forestalled us. At the same time we esteem it an ambition by no means unworthy of philosophy, to attempt to bring in now certain adornments, to make a work of art, and to produce something new of the first order. For even as cities when first founded look only to the necessities of life, to wit how they may be preserved, and how they may continue in existence, but as they advance are no longer content with what is needful, and rather expend money on the beauty of the porticoes and gymnasia, and the splendour of the forum; so in the case of knowledge, the beginning is engaged with the necessary, only the development with the excellent.¹

¹ 'Synesius must rank amongst the first men of science in his time. Berthelot identifies him with the alchemist of that name, some of whose writings were preserved through the Middle Ages, and have come down to us.'—L. Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Macmillan, 1923. Von Lippmann, however, confirms the view of Kopp, that the alchemist was another person, who used this name as a disguise. (See *Entstehung und Ausbreitung der Alchimie*, Von Lippmann, Berlin, 1919.) Berthelot (*Grande Encyclopédie*): 'Synésius ne fut pas seulement homme politique, évêque et philosophe; il a compris aussi la science dans le cercle de ses

Now the question of the projection we thought worthy of study for its own sake. We worked it out and elaborated a treatise, and studded it thickly with the necessary abundance and variety of theorems.¹ Then we made haste to translate our conclusions into a material form, and finally executed a most fair image of the cosmic expanse.

This very manner of approaching the problem gives us the means of cutting a flat surface and the even cavity into identical divisions. And as we think that any sort of hollow is more nearly allied to the completely spherical, we have hollowed the breadth by pressing it in,² and have turned our attention to the rest in suchwise that the image side of the instrument may remind the intelligent observer of the reality. For those stars which are distinguished by six dimensions, we have placed therein, preserving their relative shapes. And of the circles, some we drew round, and some so as to intersect the others. Then we divided them by degrees, making the division lines of each five degrees larger than the lines that divide each separate degree; we also enlarged the inscriptions indicating the numbers at these lines, and what is below is on silver, the black giving the appearance of a book. But they were not all cut in the same line, either individually or with each other. Some are cut

occupations. Sa lettre à Hypatie contient la première indication connue de l'aéromètre. Il s'est occupé aussi des sciences occultes de son temps, astrologie, interprétation des songes, alchimie. Nous avons sous son nom un ouvrage chimique, un commentaire sur le pseudo-Democrite écrit d'une façon à la fois élégante et profonde, et qui expose la théorie de la transmutation et du mercure des philosophes, d'après la doctrine platonicienne de la matière première.'

¹ Commentators differ over the meaning of this passage. Crawford (p. 509) says: 'We believe that there is another lost work mentioned, one which gave a full description of the astrolabe and its uses. Synesius . . . then adds that he has sent not only the treatise but the astrolabe itself. Surely, he is speaking of a scientific pamphlet compiled with elaborate precision. . . . This lost composition dates, no doubt, from that period of Synesius' residence in Constantinople when he was specially cultivating the acquaintance of Paeonius. When he decided to give him the astrolabe, he proceeded to write a treatise in explanation of it.' A very thorough and able discussion of the nature of the astrolabes will be found in Crawford's *Synesius the Hellenic*, 153 seq.

² The word *ὑπεμβολαία* is absent from Liddell and Scott: its meaning can only be guessed.

equal in size, others irregularly and unequally in appearance, but in calculation uniform and equal. This was a matter of necessity, so that the different figures should agree. On this account also the largest circles which are drawn through the poles and the signs of the tropics, although they remain circles in calculation, have become straight lines by the change in the method of view—(i.e. by the projection). Thus the Antarctic circle has been inscribed greater than the greatest, and the relative distances of the stars have been lengthened according to that plan of the projection.

As to the epigrams, they are of solid gold, and we have carved them and inserted them under the Antarctic circle in such places as are free from stars. The second of the two, the one in four lines, is ancient, and contains a general eulogy of astronomy :

Mortal I am, well I wot, and ephemeral ; yet when I thread my
Way through the crowded stars, hemming me this way and that,
No more do I touch with my feet the dark earth, but in union
eternal

Dwell I with Zeus the most high : mine is ambrosial food.¹

But that which takes precedence of this, the stanza in eight lines, was written by the one who constructed the work itself, by me, and it contains a summary and general view of those things which are seen thereon. The description is forceful, composed with more science than nicety of expression, for it seeks to tell the astronomer alone what advantage he can get from the instrument.

It professes to show the places of the stars, not their positions in respect to the zodiac, but in respect to the equator. For it has been shown in my work that it is impossible to take the positions in reference to the former. And it says that the obliquities have been represented, I mean of the parts of the zodiac with respect to the parts of the equator, and for all of them the ascensions also. That is to say, that as many divisions as there are of the zodiac, there are so

¹ Οἶδ' ὅτι θνατὸς ἐγὼ, καὶ ἐφάμερος· ἀλλ' ὅταν ἄστρον
Ἰχνεύω πυκινὰς ἀμφιδρόμους ἑλικας
Οὐκ ἐκ' ἐπιψαύω γαίης ποσίν, ἀλλὰ παρ' αὐτῷ
Ζηνὶ διοτρεφέως πίμπλαμαι ἀμβροσίης.

Ptolemy, *Anthol. Pal.* ix. 577.

many in the equator, and the same equator is divided accordingly. And this is the poem—let it be set down for such as may read it later, since for you it is enough that it lies on the tablet :

Wisdom has found a path to the heavens—O mighty marvel!
And intelligence has come from these heavenly beings.
Behold! it has also ordered the curved form of the globe,
And it has cut the equal circles with unequal spacings.
See the constellations all the way to the rim whereon the Titan,
Holding his kingdom, metes out day and night.
Accept thou the slantings of the Zodiac, nor let escape thee
Those famous centres of the noontide assemblages.

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¹ For the names of the correspondents of Synesius *see* p. 74. The references to the Introduction are here enclosed within brackets; the remaining references may serve as an index to the Greek text also, pending the publication of a satisfactory edition of it.

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